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Towards a Latter-day Saint theology of religions and the resultant
implications for inter-faith dialogue

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the
degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

James Daniel Holt

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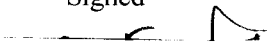
Towards a Latter-day Saint theology of religions and the resultant implications for inter-faith dialogue.

Abstract

This thesis attempts to construct a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. It does so by seeking to systematize Mormon approaches to christology, pneumatology and eschatology in relation to themes associated with theology of religions. This task has not been attempted before. The thesis reflects two dialectical strands within Mormon theology. On the one hand, Mormonism is fundamentally exclusivist with regard to other religions and on the other hand, it suggests other religions reflect the light of Christ. In trying to think through this tension, the final section of the thesis will use the Mormon linear view of eternal existence, known as the plan of salvation, as a model to argue for the existence of a continuum along which all of humanity travels. As progression is made along this continuum people accumulate knowledge, truth, and Spirit and develop in relationships. This continuum leads towards fulfilment in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The thesis will posit a Latter-day Saint paradigm for engagement with other religions that takes account of this fulfilment, and the two dialectical strands developed and examined throughout the thesis. This paradigm will maintain the exclusivist missiological purpose of Mormonism, while still advocating the possibility of the building on, and learning from, truths evident in other religions.

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

Signed

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6th June 2011

This thesis contains 99,905 words

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Dedication

For Ruth...

... and Eleanor, Abigail, Gideon and Martha

I love you

—
forever and always

This was not your dream, but you always believed in me.

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Scriptural Sources

Latter-day Saints have four books of scripture. Each is used throughout this work, for ease the various scriptures and how they are split up are listed below:

The Holy Bible

Quotes from the Bible are from the King James Version published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1985). Where names of books are shortened they are done so according to common practice. In this edition of the Bible there are two study helps that may be referred to:

The Bible Dictionary (BD)

The Topical Guide (TG)

The Book of Mormon

The *Book of Mormon* is split into the following books (which are then further split into chapters and verses).

First Nephi (1 Ne.)

Second Nephi (2 Ne.)

Jacob (Jacob)

Enos (Enos)

Jarom (Jarom)

Omni (Omni)

Words of Mormon (W of M)

Mosiah (Mosiah)

Alma (Alma)

Helaman (Hel.)

Third Nephi (3 Ne.)

Fourth Nephi (4 Ne.)

Mormon (Morm.)

Ether (Ether)

Moroni (Moro.)

The Doctrine and Covenants

The *Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C) is fully titled: *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, containing revelations given to Joseph Smith, the prophet, with some additions by his successors in the presidency of the Church.*

The *Doctrine and Covenants* is split into 138 sections which are divided into verses. There are an additional two Official Declarations (Official Declaration 1; and Official Declaration 2).

The Pearl of Great Price

The Pearl of Great Price has the subtitle: A Selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith first prophet, seer, and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Pearl of Great Price is split into the following books (which are then further split into verses):

Selections from the Book of Moses (Moses)

The Book of Abraham (Abraham)

Joseph Smith—Matthew (JSM)

Joseph Smith—History (JSH)

The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (A of F)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Nature of Study

1.1a Task One

This study seeks to accomplish two tasks. First, with regard to Latter-day Saint belief it seeks to formulate a theology of religions. This is a task that has not been attempted within Latter-day Saint theology up to this point.¹ To assist with the construction of a theology of religions the thesis will utilize existing mainstream Christian scholarship on theology of religions.² This thesis argues that the debate surrounding theologies of religion and engagement with other religions from the perspective of mainstream Christianity can be used to help to develop a Latter-day Saint approach to these issues. The main thrusts of the analysis within the thesis will focus on the broad areas of christology, pneumatology, and eschatology. Each of these areas will be explored to develop the various nuances of a theology of religions. The main paradigms used as a focus will reflect the fact that “[t]he theological discourse in the last decades has adopted a ...differentiation between inclusive, exclusive and plural theologies” (Lande, 2003: 404). These paradigms were put forward initially by Race (1983) and seek to clarify a Christian approach to other religions and their followers.³

¹ Though the work by Paulsen (2005; 2006) has begun to investigate and contextualize the fate of the unevangelized.

² In utilizing the phrase “mainstream” throughout this thesis two things should be noted. Firstly, in a similar way to Davies (2010) the phrase is not meant in a pejorative sense against Latter-day Saints. It is a simplistic way to differentiate between Latter-day Saints and other Christians. Secondly, its use is not to suggest that the mainstream view is univocal, nor that the mainstream is one homogeneous group. Rather, that within this wide designation, there are many views, and elements of various aspects can be used to help the construction of this thesis. Similarly, in making statements about the relationship between Mormonism and the mainstream this only suggests that one aspect of the mainstream is utilized.

³ D’Costa has offered a useful definition of a paradigm:

This thesis will highlight the various nuances of the three standard paradigms while recognizing their limitations both within existing Christian theology, and also for someone who is trying to formulate a theology within a Latter-day Saint framework. A Latter-day Saint theology of religions cannot be neatly accommodated in any of the mainstream paradigms, but the emphases of these paradigms will provide points of reference for a systematic development of a distinctly Latter-day Saint theology.⁴ While there has been a shift in Christian systematic theology away from strictly delineated paradigms,⁵ this thesis recognizes that although for some these paradigms are redundant, their associated outworkings may provide points of contact to assist in the formulation of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions.⁶ Therefore, this thesis will focus around doctrinal loci rather than the paradigms themselves. In examining Latter-day Saint theology, the lack of writings about theologies of religion from a Mormon perspective will necessitate contact with mainstream writings to identify areas for exploration. For this reason, this thesis will be a new approach within Mormon theology; and as such has no directly relevant literature by which to situate itself. There are a small number of works which have begun a dialogue with mainstream Christian theology (see for example Musser and Paulsen, (2007)).

I use the term “paradigm” in a sense analogous to that proposed by the philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn- as a whole set of methods and procedures dictated by a central problem solving model. Practitioners within one paradigm tend to share a number of basic presuppositions dictating their attitudes and approaches to problem-solving. If our problem is the relation of Christianity to other religions, then the paradigmatic presuppositions will be certain theological tenets which dictate the approach toward an answer. Such a model also usefully accommodates diversity within a paradigm (we will see many nuances within a single type of approach) while facilitating inspection of the key issues determining each paradigm (D’Costa, 1986: 6).

⁴ The relationship between the theology of Mormonism and mainstream Christianity is an important issue for the construction of this thesis and will be explored in sections 1.2 and 1.3.

⁵ Once ardent proponents such as D’Costa have questioned the continued validity of the traditional paradigms. In a critique of pluralism he noted that “This paper could be an act of public self-humiliation as in what follows I am going to suggest that a typology that I have promoted and defended against critics I now come to recognize as redundant” (D’Costa, 1996: 223). He rejects the paradigmatic framework because he sees all approaches as forms of exclusivism. Others have rejected the framework for different reasons (see Partridge, 2000; Markham, 1993; DiNoia, 1992).

⁶ The issue of the placement of Latter-day Saints with regard to Christianity will be explored further in this introductory chapter (1.3b).

However, none has utilized mainstream Christian theology to extend the boundaries of Mormon theology (especially in light of a theology of religions).⁷ This thesis makes, therefore, a unique contribution in constructing a Latter-day Saint theology of religions.

1.1b Task Two

The role of any theology of religions should not be merely to inform a person's belief but also to provide a basis for inter-faith relationships.⁸ Thus the second task of this study is to explore how a Latter-day Saint theology of religions may influence the Church and its members' engagement with other religions. The main argument of the thesis will be that Latter-day Saint involvement in inter-faith conversation can continue to flourish, but must do so with a much firmer background and idea of intent.⁹ Latter-day Saint works that have contributed to inter-faith dialogue have tended to focus on areas of convergence and divergence. Examples of such works include Blomberg and Robinson (1997), and Millet and Johnson (2007); both of these books highlight the importance of dialogue, and to some extent, in their layout suggest ways in which engagement can be explored. However, none combines a theological justification for a paradigm of engagement. In these little thought has been given to the basis and ground rules for such

⁷ Keller and Millet (2005), and Paulsen (2006) have included elements of the fate of the unevangelized but not within the context of a theology of religions.

⁸ The term "inter-faith" is preferred to "interfaith" throughout this thesis. Greggs argues that:

...the hyphenated nature of this term is key: when the dynamic engagement between religions is replaced by a substantialized "thing" called "interfaith", the nature and purpose of inter-faith engagements are destroyed. If the very enterprise of inter-faith dialogue replaces or overwhelms the distinctive faith communities, or becomes the primary identifier (over their own individual tradition) for those who engage in it, then inter-faith activity ceases to be the very means for genuine dialogue that it was designed to be (forthcoming: 365).

⁹ Within Latter-day Saint and Evangelical circles authors and speakers such as Millet (2005); Blomberg and Robinson (1997); and Millet and Johnson (2007) have begun the conversation between Latter-day Saints and Evangelicals. However, these seem very much limited to mid-western United States audiences and contributors.

dialogue.¹⁰ Establishing a theological background for dialogue will provide Latter-day Saints with a greater understanding of why these interactions are important, and will offer the principles that conversations should uphold and be guided by.¹¹ This task will set this thesis apart from other Mormon writings and make the paradigm a unique, and timely, addition to the Latter-day Saint corpus.

1.2 Motivations for study

The motivations of this study are several.

1.2a Using mainstream Christian thought.

This thesis argues that, while recognizing the differences, it is necessary and possible to utilize existing mainstream Christian theology in the construction of this work. The justification for this is twofold; first, there are no previous Latter-day Saint writings on a theology of the religions. The unique nature of this work will necessitate the use of existing Christian theology to navigate various nuances of theological investigation not encountered by Mormon theology previously.¹² Second, the relationship with mainstream Christianity which Mormonism sees itself as having makes such a task possible.¹³ As a restorationist and supercessionist Christian movement, Latter-day Saints do not see everything that has come before as anathema to the truths that they teach. Bushman has described the view that Mormonism holds as a “reunion with

¹⁰ Paul (2011), a Latter-day Saint, has begun to explore the rules for such engagement in establishing the Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue. However, he frames his discussion in a generic way; establishing a paradigm for all participants, with no particular Mormon perspective or justification. Aspects of Paul’s work will help with the framing of a paradigm, but cannot be considered as a Mormon justification or paradigm.

¹¹ The importance of such self-understanding is explored below (1.3b (i)).

¹² The possibility of the construction of a Mormon theology will be explored in section 1.3b.

¹³ A fuller discussion of how Latter-day Saints view the mainstream will take place in section 1.3b.

the deep past” (1984: 185). This would enable Latter-day Saints to utilize elements of Christian theology that are not in contradiction to, what they see as, revealed truths.

The exclusionary and conciliatory views of the relationship with mainstream Christianity are a reflection of the changing place of Latter-day Saints in society. As Latter-day Saints struggle to identify their place in religious circles, they have oscillated between wanting greater acceptance and, the avoidance of syncretism by, isolationism. This tension has contributed to a lack of works with regard to the religious world at large (and in particular, Christianity as whole). Mauss has noted that throughout Latter-day Saint history there has been a tension between retrenchment and assimilation:

Movements that, which, like Mormonism, survive and prosper are those that succeed in maintaining indefinitely an optimum tension between the two opposing strains: the strain toward greater assimilation and respectability, on the one hand, and that towards greater separateness, peculiarity, and militance, on the other. Along the continuum between total assimilation and total repression or destruction is a narrow segment on either side of the centre; and it is within this narrower range of socially tolerable variation that movements must maintain themselves, pendulumlike, to survive (Mauss, 1994: 5).

This view of maintaining the balance between assimilation and peculiarity is illustrated with relation to Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions and their belief in Christ. Shipps (a non-Mormon) has argued that the tension is an increasing trend within Latter-day Saint culture. In early Latter-day Saint history the focus was on exclusivity (a trend that continues today) reflected in the “total refutation of the doctrines of every other Christian body”. However, she has observed a softening in attitude and greater assimilation as there has been a turn “toward Christian rhetoric and Christian themes, not only in Mormonism’s official presentation of itself

to the world, but in Mormon life generally” (1993: 452). In the early Twenty-first Century the “assimilationist impulse is currently in ascendancy” (Wegner, 2010: 3), which highlights the tension, identified by Proctor, that “Latter-day Saints want to be accepted as part of the mainstream, but they want to be accepted into the mainstream as Latter-day Saints” (2008: 7). The challenge for Latter-day Saints is to maintain their distinctive and exclusive beliefs while moving into a more developed relationship with mainstream Christian churches, including an engagement with its theology where it can impact on Mormonism. This would support the view of Hinckley that:

We are not changing. The world’s perception of us is changing. We teach the same doctrine. We have the same organization. We labour to perform the same good works. But the old hatred is disappearing, the old persecution is dying. People are better informed. They are coming to realize what we stand for and what we do (Hinckley, 2001: 5).

Thus, it is in keeping with the current trend in Mormonism to utilize existing Christian theologies to enable a fuller exploration of Mormon theology than, perhaps, would otherwise be possible.¹⁴

In this process it is important not to focus overly on the areas of convergence. Certainly there are areas where Latter-day Saint and mainstream Christian theology overlap but making those links must not be to the exclusion of the areas of difference. Paulsen has recently made this very point in examining the convergence and divergence of Joseph Smith’s teachings with mainstream Christianity:

¹⁴ The recent works of Blomberg and Robinson (1997); and Millet and Johnson (2007) are conversations between two people. This work seeks to establish a dialogue on a doctrinal and theological level enabling, for example, Latter-day Saint theology to engage with Barth and Rahner to name but two. Paulsen (2005 and 2006) has written articles that attempt the same task but focus on a number of issues to illustrate the point without going into greater depth that a work of this size allows.

One more very important reminder: when it comes to Christian fundamentals- the divinity and lordship of Jesus Christ, his redemptive atonement, his Resurrection, and our victory through him over sin and death– there is little to distinguish Joseph’s understandings from those of “orthodox” Christians... And a final important reminder: Latter-day Saint views on many points of doctrine still differ, sometimes radically, from the more traditional Christian views. This is true for even those doctrines toward which... there has been significant Christian convergence (2006: 37-38).

However, this engagement with Christian theology will only take place when it is justified, to enable Mormon theology to unpack areas of its teaching, where Christian theology may have questions to pose or nuances to explore, which have not yet been discussed in relation to Mormonism.¹⁵

1.2b Provide a basis for engagement with other religions

As noted earlier, an impetus for engagement with other religions has begun to emerge in Latter-day Saint writings. The experience of Latter-day Saints in the world outside the mid-Western USA is one of being treated with curiosity at best (see for example Rohrer, 2008), or contempt at worst (Hazen and Koukl, 2005).¹⁶ However, in the experience of multi-cultural societies sometimes the quietest voices have much to gain from, and contribute to, the discussion. Furthermore it is interesting, for example, that in the United Kingdom there are more

¹⁵ For further discussion of this see section 1.3.

¹⁶ Hazen articulates his view thus: “I actually believe that Mormonism is a tremendous achievement of the devil!” (Hazen and Koukl, 2005: 7).

Latter-day Saints than Buddhists.¹⁷ Despite this, Buddhists have a bigger voice within inter-faith organizations in this country than Latter-day Saints.¹⁸

Latter-day Saints teach that their church is “the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30) and as such may eschew engagement with other religions. However, engagement with other religions does not have to be for the purpose of agreement. Neither does an exclusivist belief have to exclude a person or faith from the inter-faith table. Greggs has argued that sitting down with these beliefs laid out rather than hidden actually better serves inter-faith dialogue:

To sit at the inter-faith table without this fact, painful as it may be in face of the other, is to engage in a dishonest dialogue dishonestly. Our very need to sit together is grounded not only in what we share but—and herein lies the rub—in the differences we have. A number of very real dangers can arise from various quarters if this is ignored. There is, first, the danger that we sit down not as the other but as the same and thus do not sit down as religious people wishing to engage in dialogue at all. By this is meant that if we gather together around shared values (perhaps associated with one of many shades of social liberalism), we do not gather together primarily identifying as people of particular faiths but only secondarily so: we can run the danger of actually gathering together as people who are united by a (for all of the vagueness of this term) liberal agenda, through which we then see our own faith....

¹⁷ In the 2001 Census there were 149,157 people (0.3%) who identified themselves as Buddhist (Office for National Statistics, 2004). The official figures available for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reports that there are 182,000 Latter-day Saints in the UK (Newsroom: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009). These figures are slightly different, it is unclear how many of the Latter-day Saints would identify themselves as such (being based on total membership and not active membership), in the Census most, if not all, Latter-day Saints will have ticked the Christian category.

¹⁸ As an example the membership of Standing Advisory Councils for RE in local authorities in England usually have Buddhist representation, but Mormon involvement is less common (see Holt, 2005).

This leads to a second danger. This is that we do not engage in dialogue but in mutual agreement and “head nodding”. Without confronting the painful reality of the exclusive ultimates that we have (however inclusive these may be), we run the risk of entering into the kind of universalizing in which modernity has engaged in its understanding of religion—seeing ourselves as all the same and not, therefore, presenting the at times problematic elements of the coexistence of our faiths in the religiously and socially heterogeneous communities of which we are a part (Greggs, 2007: 81-82)

However Latter-day Saints understand their role in dialogue, it is the argument of this thesis that Latter-day Saints need to place themselves at the inter-faith table. Difference should be seen to be an integral part of this dialogue and should not be muted or relativized by the modernist liberalism. The engagement in inter-faith dialogue, for Latter-day Saints, needs to take into account both the retrenchment and assimilation that has characterized its history. Returning to the concluding theme of section 1.2a this thesis argues that the tension between Latter-day Saints maintaining their distinctive and exclusive identity and involving themselves more in inter-faith dialogue can be strengthened by a theological underpinning.

1.3 Method

1.3a Approach

Having examined the nature and motivations behind this study it is evident that the approach taken will be dual in nature. It will focus on exploring Mormon theology to delineate the parameters and beliefs that can be used to construct a Mormon theology of religions. Since Mormon theology is “new”, at points it will be necessary to utilize Christian systematic theology to help form a Latter-day Saint theology of religions and then consider issues relating to engagement with other religions. The systematizing of doctrine within Mormonism, to explore a

Latter-day Saint theology of religions, is needed because there has been a limited amount of this systematization attempted within Latter-day Saint theology. The utilization of mainstream Christian theology may be problematic in the development of this thesis because the relationship of Mormonism and the Christian mainstream is a difficult issue, but an attempted solution (in terms of this thesis) is offered below.

Latter-day Saints occupy a controversial place within the Christian family of churches. Titles of books such as *Are Mormons Christians?* (Robinson, 1993) suggest the tension that Latter-day Saints find in being accepted as Christian. Similarly, there is a whole genre of evangelical literature which focuses on charging Mormons with being a non-Christian cult whose view of Christ is twisted and inspired by the devil.¹⁹ In 2007 there were a number of addresses at the General Conferences of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that emphasized its Christianity.²⁰ Holland elucidated the two most common concerns with calling Latter-day Saints Christians: “By and large any controversy in this matter has swirled around two doctrinal issues—our view of the Godhead and our belief in the principle of continuing revelation leading to an open scriptural canon. In addressing this we do not need to be apologists for our faith, but we would like not to be misunderstood”.²¹ He continued “Now, to anyone within the sound of my voice who has wondered regarding our Christianity, I bear this witness. I

¹⁹ At the forefront of this anti-Mormon literature is the Utah Lighthouse Ministry (www.utlm.org) who list over a hundred works for sale. Other groups include The Evangelical Mormon Outreach Community who publish a quarterly newsletter for churches and individuals to use in “rescuing” Mormons (Immanuel Bible Church, 2010). This genre has been summarized by Introvigne where they are described as “Contemporary Evangelical Anti-Mormons” (Introvigne, 1994: 153).

Shipps suggest that rather than evangelical these groups of people should be termed “neo-evangelical” because “To the dismay of the mainstream Protestant denominations like mine who have always regarded themselves as evangelical, the *neo-evangelicals* have practically succeeded in taking possession of the evangelical designation”. She suggests that these neo-evangelicals are fundamentalists who “attempt to dechristianise those who do not agree with their position” (Shipps, 1993: 454).

²⁰ General Conference is held each April and October. These conferences are broadcast throughout the world for all the membership.

²¹ Jeffrey R. Holland is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

testify that Jesus Christ is the literal, living Son of our literal, living God” (Holland, 2007: 42). The response to the meaning of this statement may be different to the Latter-day Saint, and mainstream Christians. For credal Christians a person would understand Holland’s statement in the context of Jesus being Lord and Saviour, based on his being the second person of the Trinity, *homoousios* with the Father and so on. For Latter-day Saints, Jesus being Lord and Saviour is based on his being the second person of the Godhead, subordinate to the Father (for a deeper discussion of this see the chapter on christology) and so on. The language may be the same but the understanding is subtly or blatantly different: “One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that” (Wittgenstein, 1968: 109),²² summarised as the advice: “don’t ask for meaning ask for use”.²³ Latter-day Saints share a common terminology with mainstream Christians but may not always mean the same thing when they use it. This is one of the difficulties that this thesis will face; the work will use the common Christian language and framework (of belief and theological structure) but will also need to explore the differences of meaning to ensure that there is no misunderstanding between the two views of Christianity.

That Latter-day Saints recognize this divergence is evident as a result of their belief in the apostasy of the Church established by Christ and his apostles (Talmage, 1909). Latter-day Saints do not doubt their Christianity, but suggest that Mormonism is the only true form of Christianity. As Coleman of the Seventy concluded in answer to a youngster’s question: “As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a Christian, and I am too. I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true ‘doctrine of Christ’” (2007: 94).²⁴ This returns to the belief, mentioned earlier,²⁵ that the Church

²² Madsen, from a Mormon context, makes the same argument: “terminology is deceptive. Men may speak similarly but mean and feel differently. And as you know, the theological vocabulary is notoriously vague” (1974: 74).

²³ Hallet (1967) argues that the aforementioned phrase is never found in any of Wittgenstein’s published writings, but it is a commonplace summary of Wittgenstein’s concerns.

²⁴ The “higher” form of Christianity identified will be explored in detail throughout the thesis.

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is seen to be “the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1: 30). Latter-day Saints see the Church, and the “Gospel”, as both a restoration of the Church established by Christ and, as such, a supercession of “apostate” Christianity. The implications of these teachings are not purely negative, though a recognition that “they are hard words” (Hinckley, 2004: 3) is important. The positive nature of the restorative and supercessive nature of the Church is the recognition that not everything that has come before is wrong. As highlighted previously Latter-day Saints would be able to use the truths evident in Christian theology to explore the boundaries of Mormon doctrine.²⁶

For the purpose of this thesis it not important to consider how Latter-day Saints are viewed outside of their own beliefs and statements. This work is not an apologetic for the placement of Mormonism within the Christian family of churches; rather it is an analysis of Mormon beliefs as understood from within Mormonism, using mainstream theology to help unpack this. The use of mainstream Christian sources is valid within Mormonism, and necessary within the construction of a theology of religions, but there is the caution against assuming that what Christians mean is the same as Mormons understand it to be.²⁷

1.3b The possibility of a Mormon Theology

It has been argued “that Mormonism has no theology” (Ostler, 2007: 1). Faulconer outlines his reasons for describing Mormonism as atheological:

²⁵ See above section 1.2.

²⁶ See Section 1.2a. Smith taught: “We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them, or we shall not come out true Mormons” (Smith, J. 1938: 316).

²⁷ In the discussion of a Latter-day Saint christology (chapter 2) these concerns will acquire added importance.

In other words, [Latter-day Saints] are without an official or even semi-official philosophy that explains and gives rational support to their beliefs and teachings... As I use the word theology here, it begins with belief and uses the methods of rational philosophy to give support to that belief: dogmatic, systematic, or rational theology... [S]ome Latter-day Saint leaders and thinkers have devoted considerable energy to formulating theologies of various kinds. Nevertheless, none of those efforts have come to fruition (none has been accepted as official...), and I think none will” (2006: 21-22).²⁸

Ostler counters this claim by suggesting that “Theology is the attempt to make sense of our world given what has been revealed”; as such Mormon theology is the view “which makes the most sense of our experience” and can be articulated and formulated (2007: 4).²⁹ Within Mormonism there are accepted teachings that form the basis of faith and doctrine. An example of this would be the *Articles of Faith* which form a part of the scripture, *The Pearl of Great*

²⁸ Midgley suggests further that to attempt theology is against the principles of Mormonism

Whenever we attempt to do theology, or fashion a system of doctrines, we end up in contention and disputation, for the entire enterprise is an exercise in arrogance and pride, against which the Book of Mormon warns (1989: 104).

²⁹ Properzi has begun to explore the difference between doctrine and, what is perceived to be, theology in Mormonism:

On the other hand, this is not a canonically normative connection within Mormonism because it is largely based on an unnecessary conflation of “theology” and “doctrine”, which was precipitated by the disappearance of the term “theology” in LDS parlance. In fact, as I understand the terms, “doctrine” pertains to dogma, which is binding for the whole institution and its members, whereas theology does not require such an authoritative status. It may be expressed as a personal interpretation, which implicitly claims its own authority, but it does not necessarily involve a challenge to dogmatic authority. Thus, the virtual elimination of a classification category for nonbinding religious thought, namely “theology”, has often dichotomized pronouncements on religious matters as either “doctrinal” or “non-doctrinal”. It follows that Mormons may be uncertain about the proper classification of the “dogmatic theology” (in the venue of theological reflection upon a dogmatic core) which originates in educators or other individuals who are not General Authorities. On the one hand its derivation from individuals viewed as “orthodox” and its emergence from what is perceived as “doctrine” constitute its *prima facie* authoritative justification. On the other hand, particularly when theology aims to fill a doctrinal vacuum or when it appears to contradict existing statements perceived to be “doctrinal” by some, it falls under a perception of suspicion which may even prevent its very emergence (2009: 17).

Price. These thirteen statements establish orthodoxy on which exploration can be developed. Ostler outlines the fact that the theology expounded by Mormonism is always subject to revision by future revelations (Latter-day Saints believe in a living prophet)³⁰ and using Reymond's definition of the role of systematic theology Mormonism could be seen to be unable to fulfil the task of theology: "the systematic theologian, viewing the Scriptures as a completed revelation, seeks to understand holistically the plan, purpose, and didactic intention of the divine mind revealed in Holy Scripture" (1998: xxv). In Latter-day Saint teaching revelation is not completed and can always be added to. However, this does not preclude the ability to construct a theology; in the sense that a theology is a second order discipline which allows theologians to make a structure within which to understand what traditions believe. Ostler claims that Latter-day Saints "can have systematic theology" because "of ongoing revelation meaning that we must always be open to more and to be willing to be corrected based on an incomplete understanding" (2007: n23).

While recognizing the basis of the argument against a Mormon theology, this thesis adopts the approach of Ostler in suggesting that a systematic Mormon theology is possible.³¹ There are certain doctrines that are firmly established in Mormon thought and are not subject to change by a prophet:

³⁰ This is the reason that Millet gives for arguing that a systematic theology is impossible within Mormonism (Millet, 2007a).

³¹ While recognizing that a Mormon theology is possible the question remains as to whether it is necessary, or even desirable. Ostler answers the question thus:

In the end, theology is the attempt to make sense of the faith we have received in terms that make it meaningful in the world and time in which we live, move and have our being. It is the insistence that if we end up with three parallel lines that have all of their points in common, it is time to drink more deeply of the revelations and go back to the drawing board to start aright again (2007: 8).

If Ostler's definition of theology is accepted then the desirability of a theology for any faith community to be able to make sense of their beliefs is straightforward.

Procedures, programs, policies, and patterns of organization are helpful for our spiritual progress here on earth, but let's not forget that they are subject to change. *In contrast, the core of the Gospel—the doctrine and the principles—will never change.* Living according to the basic Gospel principles will bring power, strength, and spiritual self-reliance into the lives of all Latter-day Saints (Uchtdorf, 2005: 100 emphasis added).

Examples of this core would include the person and work of Christ; the centrality of the First Vision; the importance of the church organization; and the work of the Holy Ghost.³² It is within this core that this thesis will work to construct a theology.³³ This thesis draws on orthodox Mormon thought and does not seek to go outside of that;³⁴ but how is that orthodoxy established? “Christian theology is always grounded in some specific kind of authority, and for Mormonism it is prophetic” (Davies, 2003: 37). Poelman suggests that “The orthodoxy upon which we insist must be founded in fundamental principles, eternal law, and direction given by those authorized in the Church” (1984: 64).³⁵ Latter-day Saint orthodoxy is summarized by the maxim “Follow the brethren”. This suggests that what is taught in the scriptures and by the

³² Within Latter-day Saint writings it is far more common to see the term “Holy Ghost” rather than Holy Spirit. For this reason the “Holy Ghost” is preferred throughout this work. The meanings are, however, synonymous.

³³ There are elements of theological method that a Latter-day Saint theology cannot fit neatly into. As a result Mormonism may need to construct its own structure and definition of theology. When a Latter-day Saint examines Berkhof’s four tasks of theology (Berkhof, 1932: 58-59) the acceptance of the constructive, demonstrative and defensive nature of theology would be straightforward. However, the “critical” task of theology would rest uneasily within Mormonism. The necessity of allowing “for the possibility of a departure from the truth at some point or other” (ibid: 59) would seem to be anathema in Mormonism (see the following discussion in the main body of the text for a discussion of doctrinal orthodoxy).

³⁴ This is not to deny that liberal Mormonism exists; only that it is not within the parameters of this work. Its existence is shown in an email the author received from a self-confessed “liberal Mormon”: “A sense that the liberalization of Mormonism is important is about all that counts. People have different reasons for wanting to liberalize Mormonism. I’m aware that many conservative or orthodox Mormons would prefer that the creature called a liberal Mormon would go away. I am convinced, however, that the Church needs the leavening that those committed to its liberalization provide. They help the Church remain conversant with the large world” (dated 24/02/04).

³⁵ Poelman is a Seventy speaking in the General Conference of the Church.

General Authorities of the Church is to be the basis of doctrine.³⁶ Nothing that is in conflict with either of these sources is to be accepted:

May I suggest three short tests to avoid being deceived...? First, what do the standard works have to say about it? ... The second guide is, what do the Latter-day Presidents of the Church have to say on the subject -- particularly the living President? . . . When speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost his words are scripture (D&C 68:4) ... The third and final test is the Holy Ghost -- the test of the spirit. By the spirit we "may know the truth of all things" (Moro. 10:5). This test can only be fully effective if one's channels of communication with God are clean and virtuous and uncluttered with sin (Benson, 1963: 16-17).³⁷

There may be some flexibility in understanding, but the parameters of the doctrine of the Church are clearly delineated. Theology takes place within these parameters, as matters open to correction and change as a second order discipline.

One further difficulty in constructing a theology is the fact that the majority of Latter-day Saint writings are devotional in nature; there is little academic writing on which to draw.³⁸ While this will provide an obstacle in finding academic writers in a Latter-day Saint context to

³⁶ General Authorities (First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve and First and Second Quorum of the Seventies) are the "brethren" referred to. Though at a lower the ward (equivalent to an Anglican parish) and stake (equivalent to an Anglican diocese) leaders are seen as representatives of these brethren.

³⁷ See also Benson (1981) for a fuller discussion of the importance of following the Prophet in Latter-day Saint belief.

³⁸ Looking at the main Latter-day Saint book publisher's website (www.deseretbook.com), one is faced with a myriad of books that examine Latter-day Saint belief. Most of these books are faith promoting and written to assist the lay reader in their understanding of their beliefs and how they should live their lives. Similarly when looking at the independent "Mormon" publisher www.signaturebooks.com one is again faced with an array of historical, biographical and in some cases critical books; few of which have been written with an academic audience in mind. BYU Religious Studies Centre, *BYU Studies* and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* go some way to academically look at Latter-day Saint theology but they are the exception rather than the rule.

support the overall thesis of this work, it will provide an opportunity to open up this type of dialogue and writing in the same way Paulsen (2006) has begun to do. What will have to be guarded against, however, is that in using this devotional and doctrinal material the thesis does not become a sermon about Latter-day Saint belief but remains a second order, rational reflection on the devotional and other material to ensure it develops into a systematic theology.

1.3c Inter-faith or ecumenical

The self-definition of Latter-day Saints as supercessionist Christians raises some further problems when examining engagement with other religions. When Latter-day Saints engage in dialogue with mainstream Christian denominations is it as a member of the same community or as different religions?³⁹ MacIntyre argues that the question of how one approaches others is not just important for the validity of the dialogue undertaken, but also for the participating groups understanding of what they are trying to achieve and their presuppositions: “Such a person is confronted by the claims of each of the traditions which we have considered as well as by those of other traditions. How is it rational to respond to them? The initial answer is: that will depend upon who you are and how you understand yourself” (1988: 393). This is important in determining how inter-faith dialogue is to be approached. If Latter-day Saints approach other Christians as “other” religions what impact will this have on their engagement?

Latter-day Saint tensions with mainstream Christianity are explored by Shipps in the following terms: “just as the early Christians believed they had found the only proper way to be Jews, so the early followers of the Mormon Prophet believed they had found the only proper way to be Christians... The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is best understood as a form of corporate Christianity... in much the same way that early Christianity was related to

³⁹ At this point of the thesis it is not necessary to explore Mormonism’s relationship to non-Christian religions. It is not that these relationships are unimportant, rather they are not subject to the same ambiguity as Mormonism’s relation to mainstream Christianity.

Judaism” (1993: 441). Early Christianity could be seen to supercede Judaism in suggesting that this new faith was “Judaism fulfilled”. In a similar way Latter-day Saints could be seen to supercede other Christians in suggesting that they are “Christianity fulfilled”. For early Christianity Ruether argues that it is impossible “to say ‘Jesus is Messiah’ without implicitly or explicitly, saying at the same time ‘and the Jews be damned’” (1974: 246).⁴⁰ For Latter-day Saints the corollary is highlighted in a book by Wood entitled *The Complete Christian*. The tone throughout the book, perhaps unconsciously, is that although other people are “good” only Latter-day Saints can be complete Christians (Wood, 2007). Latter-day Saints do not just see themselves as Christians but as the only true Christians. It seems as though people cannot be true, or complete, Christians outside of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴¹

The idea of Mormonism as a separate religion is reflected in Latter-day Saint culture. Stark has argued that Mormonism is going to become the next “new world religion” which “will soon achieve a worldwide following comparable to that of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and the other dominant faiths. ... Indeed, today they [Latter-day Saints] stand on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on earth since the Prophet Mohammed” (Stark, 1984: 18-19).⁴² Latter-day Saint “leaders have themselves paid explicit attention to Stark’s work” and its views have gained credence throughout Latter-day Saint membership

⁴⁰ This statement is inflammatory, and may not be accepted by all. However, it provides an “extreme” outworking of the supercessionist nature of Christianity that can be used to explore the implications of the Mormon claims of supercession.

⁴¹ This is a bold claim to make, but nevertheless one that is borne out by the Latter-day Saint theology that will be explored throughout this thesis. It should be recognized, however, that Latter-day Saints would see Christians as possessing some truth but not the fulness. Dunn (1999) argues that the early Christians needed something to negate and reject to find its own identity. This argument is similarly made by Shipps when discussing Latter-day Saint rhetoric against other Christian churches which has settled down in more recent times as this identity is already established they “no longer have a sociological need for Gentiles. They do not need an *other* to set themselves apart either rhetorically or categorically”. It shows the “self confidence of a people whose identity is now fixed and steadfast enough that they no longer need to be segregated from other denominations” (2000: 347). Davies (2010) disagrees and suggests that apostate Christianity is needed as a foil for Latter-day Saints self-identification.

⁴² Stark seems to have ignored Sikhism in his assessment.

(Davies, 2003: 245).⁴³ The “positive” attention that Stark’s works received has not been fully explored within Mormonism in the context of the relationship with mainstream Christianity. While Latter-day Saints make great efforts to assert their Christianity, it is antithetical to posit the Church as a new world religion. This tension is reflective of the Mormon struggle with retrenchment and assimilation, identifying that both tendencies are still active within Latter-day Saint teaching.

The asymmetry of mainstream Christianity and Latter-day Saint relationships is mirrored in Judaeo-Christian dialogue; each approaches it in different ways and thus their goals are different.⁴⁴ Dunn argues that this type of relationship highlights “the importance of distinguishing *self*-definition from phenomenological definition (that is, early Christians might claim that they are still within the parameters of the Jewish heritage = Jews, when it was already obvious from a spectator’s perspective that they had become something different)” (Dunn, 1999a: 366). Latter-day Saints view themselves as Christians from their own perspective and mainstream Christianity as not fully Christian. The knowledge of how a group or person views others is crucial to an inter-faith dialogue which confronts “the painful reality of the exclusive ultimates that we have” (Greggs, 2007: 82). The inter-faith relationship is not just about the points that intersect in belief, but also about the tensions that allow these intersections to exist. These differences do not have to be based in antagonism; Turner asks the question, that if these differences are not addressed, “How do we learn to live together with such differences unresolved? For, if we cannot find a way to deal with these things then what hope can we bring to the world?” (Turner, 2010: 2).

⁴³ See Tobler (1987) for Stark’s works positive mention in the official magazine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints— *The Ensign* (see also Haroldsen, 1995; Searle, 1987; Haight, 1990). Particular emphasis has been placed on Stark’s membership estimates.

⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier it is possible for Christians to approach Judaism as “unfulfilled” whilst Jews would approach Christians as “other”. It is the argument of this work that this relationship is replicated between Latter-day Saint and traditional Christianity.

The recognition of different approaches and goals in inter-faith dialogue is acceptable as long as both parties recognize the differences. MacIntyre recognizes this tension:

It becomes clear that the problem... of how to confront the rival systematic claims of traditions contending with each other in the *agōn* of ideological encounter are not one and the same set of problems for all persons. What those problems are, how they are to be formulated and addressed, and how, if at all, they may be resolved will vary not only with the historical, social, and cultural situation of the persons whose problems these are but also with the history of belief and attitude of each particular person up to the point at which he or she finds these problems inescapable (1988: 393).

While Latter-day Saints and mainstream Christians both use the term “Christian” in their understandings and conversations, it would be most beneficial to recognize the areas of convergence and divergence. To do so would ensure that the experience is a “genuine intellectual encounter” and not “some generalized, abstract” and ultimately fruitless exchange of ideas (MacIntyre, 1988: 393). Latter-day Saints would not seek ecumenism. While sharing commonalities it would seem that Latter-day Saints would view mainstream Christianity as “other” religions, and therefore the dialogue entered into would be inter-faith rather than ecumenical. However, it is important to note that Latter-day Saint dialogue and interaction with mainstream Christianity will be somewhat different to that with non-Christian religions. The thesis will need to account for this diversity of approach, and how it may work in practice.⁴⁵

The acknowledgement of non-Latter-day Saint religions as “other” is an inevitable and honest place for Latter-day Saints to begin engagement with other religions. Similar problems

⁴⁵ The diversity of approach to other religions and its validity will be explored in chapter 5 (especially 5.3).

that Greggs argued Barth faced, could be seen to face Latter-day Saints in their inter-faith dialogue:

...but it is worth acknowledging that clear difficulties exist in Barth's presentation of the critique of religion, and it is not difficult to see how some readers may take away the impression that Barth is a somewhat bigoted Christian who seeks apologetically to establish the uniqueness of Christianity over and against any other faith position. Crude as such a presentation is, it does, however, highlight certain issues that the Christian theologian engaging in inter-faith dialogue must confront (2007: 81).

Within this thesis, these difficulties will be explored in further detail from a Latter-day Saint perspective. The issue of fruitful inter-faith dialogue based on the view that Latter-day Saints see themselves as the only true Church, and as superceding all other Christian churches, needs to be addressed to build a successful theology of religions that is both honest and contributory. This dialogue for Latter-day Saints will be inter-faith at a very early stage of development, similar to the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism.⁴⁶

1.4 Thesis

In constructing a Latter-day Saint theology of religions this thesis will explore the broad areas of christology, pneumatology and eschatology. It is the argument of this thesis that Latter-day Saint christology, pneumatology and eschatology are crucial to a development of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. Each of these areas of systematic theology will begin with a classical explanation of the Mormon position. This will entail a fairly descriptive outlining of Mormon theology as would be understood in the grassroots of the Church today. Various

⁴⁶ Latter-day Saint ecclesiology as the "one true Church" suggests that an ecumenical element can be seen as they want to be seen as the only "true Christians". In a similar way to the early Church being the only "true Jews".

nuances and questions raised within the classical section will be explored in the following constructive section of each chapter. It is in this section that existing mainstream Christian scholarship may be used to help the lines of thought begun within classical Mormonism, but more fully explored in mainstream Christianity in relation to themes associated with theologies of religion. The final part of each chapter will investigate and highlight the implications of this area in constructing a theology of religions.

Within the analysis of Mormon christology the work and person of Christ will be explored using Latter-day Saint writings. The focus of traditional theologies of the religions relates to an understanding of who Christ is and what role he serves in relation to salvation. Within the classical section of the christology chapter, the focus will similarly be on who Jesus is understood to be, and how his work relates to salvation. With regard to developing a Latter-day Saint theology of religions, there will be various elements of mainstream theology that will be used to expand the development of a distinctly Mormon christology in the constructive section of the chapter. The resultant implications for a theology of religions will be highlighted and developed in the final section of the chapter.

In Latter-day Saint theology the work of the Spirit is intertwined with the work of Christ (Alma 13:11-12). The work on a classical Latter-day Saint pneumatology will focus on the main works of the Spirit which will also include an exploration of ecclesiology. Ecclesiology, as “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12: 27), could legitimately find a place in the discussion of christology. However, it will be discussed in light of pneumatology to recognize the Spirit’s importance in the continued life and progression of the Church. This is not to lessen the Spirit’s importance as a reflection of Christ. Revelations from Christ through the Holy Ghost lead and guide both the individual and the Church: “Through the whisperings of the Holy [Ghost] we know that the true head of this Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, does communicate with us through [the living Prophet]. How blessed we are as Latter-day Saints to know that God can speak to us through our

living prophet today and give us guidance and instruction and encouragement so that we may continue, just as the Lord's true Church continues, steadfast and confident on the path that leads us back to Him" (Jensen, 1998: 12).⁴⁷ The work of the Spirit in Latter-day Saint theology is crucial in further understanding soteriology for the Church, its members and the unevangelized. In establishing a mainstream theology of religions there has been a number of books that have sought to re-establish the importance of the role of the Spirit in salvation (see for example Pinnock, 1996; Yong, 2003; Greggs, 2009). This thesis will build on the classical Mormon pneumatology to extend various areas Latter-day Saint pneumatology using mainstream Christian theology to help think through Latter-day Saint pneumatology. The extent of the Spirit's work (in tandem with the Son) will enable further reflection to take place on the validity and salvific efficacy of other religions (including non-Latter-day Saint Christians) in the final section of the chapter.

In developing a Mormon theology of religions examining the final destiny of humankind it is necessary to draw the other elements of the theology together. In mainstream Christian theology Reymond has argued that eschatology is "the capstone of systematic theology, with every other locus of theology finding its resolution in it" (1998: 98). This chapter will explore how the Son and the Spirit work together under the direction of the Father to draw humanity to him in the end. The previous two chapters will be used, in tandem with appropriate mainstream writings, to explore Latter-day Saint beliefs about life after death. With this basis in place the implications of Latter-day Saint eschatology for a theology of religions will be considered.

The argument of this thesis is that with a proper understanding of the work of the Son and the Spirit, and of eschatology within Latter-day Saint theology, it will then be possible to construct a theology of religions that will be distinctly Latter-day Saint. This will contribute to

⁴⁷ Jensen was a member of the Seventy.

the existing discussion surrounding theologies of religion in Christian theology but also seek to provide Latter-day Saints with a framework in which to work and develop their own understanding of their relationship to other religions.

Utilizing the theology of religions, this thesis will then attempt to put forward a paradigm for engagement with other religions from a Latter-day Saint perspective. Paul has argued that in today's society such a paradigm, with their associated rules is crucial for honest engagement with other religions:

...[I]t is time for people who share the earth to establish these conventions for engaging in conflicts over religion and ideology in a healthy and mutually enhancing way, a way that might be able to transform the energy of conflict into a force for creative, constructive personal learning and societal enhancement (nd: 2).

It is such a task that this thesis hopes to develop in the final part of this work. This paradigm will be grounded in the theology developed throughout the thesis, but posit suggestions and a way forward for Latter-day Saints to engage with other religions constructively and honestly. At this stage the suggestions will be the logical outworkings of the arguments of the thesis, and will point forward toward opportunities for greater development and exploration. In this way, the thesis will strive to be both constructive and practical theology in a Latter-day Saint framework.

Chapter 2: Christology

2.1. Introduction

The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it (Smith, J. 1938: 121).

In beginning the theological underpinnings of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions the starting point is an exploration of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Every other aspect of Mormon theology has its basis in, and is validated through its relationship to, christology.⁴⁸ In developing a theology of religions that is distinctly Mormon a reflection on who Christ is, and the extent of his role in salvation, is crucial. Within the paradigms usually associated with theology of religions the nature and work of Christ has been seen to influence the points of demarcation. The view of Christ can determine whether salvation is available through explicit or implicit belief in Christ, or as one Saviour among many (Karkkainen, 2003). This chapter will explore the view of Christ in Latter-day Saint teaching and belief, and how this can be used to inform the development of a theology of religions. The first section will focus on establishing a classical Mormon christology as understood in today's church.⁴⁹ The chapter will then move

⁴⁸ Within Mormonism, the term christology is used infrequently. However, this should not be taken to suggest that Mormonism does not discuss the work and person of Jesus Christ, moreover, Keller has suggested that "everything about Mormonism is christological to the core" (Keller, 2006: 309).

⁴⁹ Whether the view of Christ's work evident in today's Church reflects historical Latter-day Saint teaching has been the subject of recent debate. Millet has suggested that for some there is the question: "Is there some effort on the part of the Church leadership to have the Church and its teachings, particularly those concerning Jesus Christ, become more acceptable to and thus more accepted by other Christians?" (Millet, 2006: 231). In answering the question, Millet argues that "while the basic doctrines found in Joseph Smith's own words, in the revelations given to and through him, and in his translations of ancient records remain unaltered" (ibid: 231), there has been a change in "emphasis placed upon these subjects and upon the Church's belief in Christ" (ibid: 232) enabling Latter-day Saints to address "specific areas of misunderstanding" to defend or articulate their belief in Christ (ibid:

onto a constructive section where various elements of classical Mormon christology will be explored to broaden the traditional focus that will have been undertaken in the first section. The final section will examine the implications of this christology when considering issues within the development of a theology of religions. This conclusion will identify themes that form the basis for discussion in subsequent chapters in order to fully construct a Latter-day Saint theology of religions.

2.2 Classical Mormon Christology

2.2a The Nature of God and the Godhead

Within Mormonism, “it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God... Here, then, is eternal life to know the only true and wise God” (Smith, J. 1938: 345-6). Christ’s place within an understanding of the nature and person of God is important for Latter-day Saints in constructing a christology and a theology of religions. This knowledge of the nature of God will be a recurring theme throughout this chapter, especially as it impinges on a theology of religions.

2.2a (i) The First Vision

Latter-day Saints use the term “Godhead” rather than “Trinity” to describe the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.⁵⁰ The importance of the separate nature of the three members of the

243). These contrasting views are a reflection of the changing place of Latter-day Saints in society. Mauss has noted that as Latter-day Saints have struggled for acceptance there has been a tension between retrenchment and assimilation. This has not diluted the exclusive beliefs that will be explored in the section on ecclesiology (3.2d), but have moved Latter-day Saints into more of a relationship with Christian Churches (1994).

⁵⁰ It has been argued that some Latter-day Saint scripture could be seen to reflect Trinitarian thought:

I remember the first time I read the Book of Mormon cover to cover in response to an invitation to do so by a Mormon missionary. I already had learned that the LDS rejected the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. I was surprised, therefore, as I found more instances of seemingly clear

Godhead is exemplified in the teachings of Mormonism, especially in the foundational event, the First Vision.⁵¹ In this event Smith records:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other--This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! (JSH 1:16-17).

The First Vision establishes for Latter-day Saints the separate nature of the Godhead, and further teachings of Smith support and strengthen this: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s, the Son also” (D&C 130:22). The First Vision does not define the nature of the relationships within the Godhead.⁵² The First Vision is described as “[t]he greatest event that has ever occurred in the world, since the Resurrection of the Son of God from the tomb and his ascension on high” (Smith, J. F. 1939: 495). Utilizing this experience, Latter-day Saints interpret every other principle of their religion: “Having accepted this truth, I find it easy to accept of every other truth that he [Joseph Smith] enunciated and declared during his mission of fourteen years in the world” (Smith, J. F. 1939: 496). The First Vision establishes an important baseline

Trinitarian language in the Book of Mormon than in the Old and New Testaments put together. I am still perplexed by this phenomenon as I read texts like 1 Ne. 19:10; 2 Ne. 10:3; 11:7; 25:12; 31:21; Mosiah 3:5-8; 7:27; 13:34; Alma 11:29-44; Hel. 14:12; 3 Ne. 9:15 and Mormon 7:7. If anything, it is *clearer* in several of these texts that it was the same God who was God the Father who became incarnate in the Son. Indeed, in several places the Son seems to be identified with the Father, as he is called “the Eternal Father,” a direct equation the Bible never makes (Blomberg, 1997: 124)

Latter-day Saints do, however, distinguish between a belief in the Trinity and their belief in the Godhead, as Blomberg observes. However, the Book of Mormon raises Trinitarian issues that need explaining and contextualizing in a Mormon framework.

⁵¹ The “First Vision” is the name given to the experience that Latter-day Saints believe Joseph Smith had in a grove of trees in the Spring of 1820– the exact nature of this event will be explored in detail in the body of the text.

⁵² The corporeality of God suggested by this scripture is discussed below (2.2b (ii)).

for Latter-day Saints in their doctrine; all of their teaching should be developed and viewed through the spectacles of the revelations of Joseph Smith (Millet, 2005).⁵³

The First Vision is a useful case study in examining how Latter-day Saint teaching fulfils two purposes. The First Vision articulates the beliefs that Latter-day Saints hold (in this case the teaching that Christ and his Father are two distinct personages), while also recognizing the teachings that they reject as a consequence. Smith was told that the mainstream Christian “creeds were an abomination” (JSH 1:20) and “all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines” (Smith, J. 1996 [1842]: 376).⁵⁴ The creeds, as understood by Smith, referred to the declarations of the Councils of the churches that had been adopted as official doctrine. Included in these would be the Athanasian Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed.⁵⁵ This dual function in the articulation of belief in the First Vision is recognized in modern Latter-day Saint teaching, Hinckley suggests:

They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition, the creeds which came of a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

They spoke to him. He spoke with Them. He testified openly, unequivocally, and

⁵³ Millet argues that the major difference between traditional Christianity and Latter-day Saints is that their views of God are viewed through separate pairs of spectacles. Trinitarian Christianity views the Bible and its view of God through the spectacles of the creeds, whereas Latter-day Saints view them through the spectacles of the revelations of Joseph Smith.

⁵⁴ Not all “mainstream” Christians are necessarily “credal” in their beliefs. However, the religious denominations were still recipient of the “incorrect doctrines” description of the First Vision.

⁵⁵ It is the teachings of the former two that receive the greatest condemnation. *The Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C 18: 17-28) has been observed to contain its own version of the Apostle’s Creed (Alexander, 1980).

unabashedly of that great vision. It was a vision of the Almighty and of the Redeemer of the world, glorious beyond our understanding but certain and unequivocating in the knowledge which it brought. It is out of that knowledge, rooted deep in the soil of modern revelation, that we, in the words of Nephi, “talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that [we and] our children may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins” (2 Ne. 25:26) (Hinckley, 2002: 90-91).

Although there is an effort on the part of some Latter-day Saint writers to place the Church’s belief in Christ into the same language and understanding as mainstream Christianity (see for example Millet, 2005), it is important for Latter-day Saints to delineate their belief. There are aspects that are similar, but the legacy of the understanding of Christ inherent in the First Vision cannot, and should not, be ignored.

2.2a (ii) The First Vision and the Creeds

Smith taught the centrality of a proper understanding of the nature of God. Using First Vision theology, traditional Christian teachings about the nature of God were contradicted. For Latter-day Saints, the three persons of the Godhead are separate and distinct as the Father introduces the Son and identifies him as such. Smith saw the First Vision and the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a return to the pure teachings of the Saviour and his apostles.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This primitivism was not unusual in the Eastern USA in the early nineteenth century:

The primitive Gospel movement emerged independently in New England, the South, and the West among a variety of groups... These groups took flight from the existing old-line churches. They saw them as corrupt and apostate in nature and affirmed the necessity of a restoration of the primitive faith and order. Each group was stirred by the revivals which swept the nation during the Second Great Awakening yet reacted strongly against the sectarian conflict which developed in their wake, stressing the need for lasting Christian unity. They each manifested a cautious biblical authoritarianism and a tendency to reject the Calvinistic doctrine of election and affirm man’s free will (Hill, 1969: 353-354).

Smith understood this teaching on the nature of God as a return to biblical Christianity, seeing the creeds as an addition to, and a perversion of, this pure Gospel: “Second--Wherein do you differ from other sects? In that we believe the Bible, and all other sects profess to believe their interpretations of the Bible, and their creeds” (Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 3: 28). The creeds, for Smith, are creations of men and not of God:

I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations, because they all have some things in them I cannot subscribe to, though all of them have some truth. I want to come up into the presence of God, and learn all things; but the creeds set up stakes, and say, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; which I cannot subscribe to (Smith, J. 1938: 327).

This mixture of truth mingled with falsity is seen by Smith to be a tool of Satan.⁵⁷ Thus confusion and contradiction is its result:

There is much said about God and the Godhead. The scriptures say there are Gods many and Lords many, but to us there is but one living and true God, and the heaven of heavens could not contain him; for he took the liberty to go into other heavens. The teachers of the day say that thy Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and they are all in one body and one God. Jesus prayed that those that the Father

Primitivism was also a part of Smith’s family beliefs. Both Lucy Mack Smith (his mother), Joseph Smith Senior (his father), and Aesal Smith (his paternal Grandfather) adopted primitivist outlooks (see Hill, 1969; Anderson, 2003; Vogel, 2004). This is a theme common among many early Latter-day Saints (see Hill, 1969). However, McConkie argues that Smith and Mormonism went further than this primitivism:

The genius of Joseph Smith is not in the claim of restoring New Testament Christianity. Scattered all over the American frontier were various groups caught up in a “great back to the Bible movement” which centred in the attempt to restore New Testament Christianity. What makes Joseph Smith and the message of the Restoration so distinct was the manner in which it echoes the testimony of the Old Testament prophets and claims to be preparatory to the filling of the covenants God made with Abraham (McConkie, J. 2010: 60).

⁵⁷ See Smith, J (1938: 214) where Satan appears as Angel and gives both truth and error in his message.

had given him out of the world might be made one in them, as they were one. If I were to testify that the Christian world were wrong on this point, my testimony would be true (Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 5: 426).

The creeds were, for Smith, evidence of the apostate nature of Christianity. He argued that if people listened to the Spirit of God, there would be certainty and clarity on this, and other, matters:

... if it requires the Spirit of God to know the things of God; and the spirit of the devil can only be unmasked through that medium, then it follows as a natural consequence that unless some person or persons have a communication, or revelation from God, unfolding to them the operation of the spirit, they must eternally remain ignorant of these principles; for I contend that if one man cannot understand these things but by the Spirit of God, ten thousand men cannot; it is alike out of the reach of the wisdom of the learned, the tongue of the eloquent, the power of the mighty. And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God, or the devil; and however unwilling the world may be to acknowledge this principle, it is evident from the multifarious creeds and notions concerning this matter that they understand nothing of this principle, and it is equally as plain that without a divine communication they must remain in ignorance (Smith, J. 1938: 205).

Smith could not accept that the creeds were a summary of revealed doctrine. Crucially, in terms of a theology of religions for him and Latter-day Saints today, a true understanding and knowledge of God, the mission of Jesus Christ and his Gospel is essential for salvation:

Add to your faith knowledge, etc. The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; and every

one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned. The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Smith, J. 1938: 297).⁵⁸

The importance of knowledge in the salvation of humanity, especially in relation to the nature of God and Christ, needs further exploration.⁵⁹ The suggestion is that belief in Christ is not sufficient to save; rather, *correct* belief in Christ is what is needed. Orthodoxy thus has crucial implications for salvation.

⁵⁸ There has been debate about the accuracy of Smith's 1838 version of the events of the First Vision which is reproduced in the *Pearl of Great Price* (see Alexander, 1980). Some suggest that it is evidence of the more refined theology Smith had developed by that time (see Vogel, 2004). However contemporary Latter-day Saint orthodoxy would argue that the First Vision happened as recorded, and hence Smith's (and the Latter-day Saint) belief in the separate nature of the members of the Godhead traces all the way back to the events of 1820. A belief supported in a statement by Smith towards the end of his life:

I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods (Smith, J. 1938: 370).

Alexander has noted that this is a flaw in the beliefs of modern Latter-day Saints:

Perhaps the main barrier to understanding the development of Mormon theology is an underlying assumption by most Church members that there is a cumulative unity of doctrine. Mormons seem to believe that particular doctrines develop consistently, that ideas build on each other in hierarchical fashion. As a result, older revelations are interpreted by referring to current doctrinal positions. Thus, most members would suppose that a scripture or statement at any point in time has resulted from such orderly change. While this type of exegesis or interpretation may produce systematic theology and while it may satisfy those trying to understand and internalize current doctrine, it is bad history since it leaves an unwarranted impression of continuity and consistency (Alexander, 1980: 24).

He includes in this the belief in God. However, contemporary Latter-day Saints would see this as "unfaithful history" (A term inverting the title of a book *Faithful History* (Smith, G. D. 1992) in which historians/theologians from both sides of the debate put forward their views). Latter-day Saint orthodoxy can consider a building up of understanding in various areas (as will be seen with the issue of eschatology) but with the crucial nature of the concept of God and the First Vision, they would not be able to countenance a developmental theology and would see any idea of this as a misunderstanding of the facts. Indeed, Bohn suggests that those who write critical history commit "acts of intellectual violence against the believing community" by seeking to "de-literalize or mythologize the historical reality" of founding events. He continues that these same historians have anti-religious biases and hide behind a pretended objectivity (Bohn, 1992: 228).

⁵⁹ See below in the constructive section of this chapter (2.3).

The separateness of the persons of the Godhead raises two problems that still need to be answered to establish a coherent christology: If Christ is separate to the Father how is he one? The second question has resonances of the Arian controversy: If Christ is separate to the Father, is he equal with God (therefore two Gods) or does he, as a subordinate creation, have power sufficient to save humanity?

The commentary on the creeds and the resultant attitudes towards the beliefs of traditional Christianity are important in the construction of a theology of religions. If religious beliefs that are contrary to Latter-day Saint teaching are considered to be inspired by the devil, then the holding of these beliefs may have negative implications for a theology of religions.⁶⁰

2.2a (iii) One God

The Book of Mormon teaches “The Father and I (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Ghost are one” (3 Ne. 11:36 cf 1 John 5:7). While recognizing their separate nature it is important in a Latter-day Saint understanding of God to maintain a unity within the Godhead. This oneness is “a oneness of mind, of knowledge, of purpose, of will” (Roberts, 1903: 29). Ostler extends this understanding of the unity of the Godhead and describes it as “so complete that each of the distinct divine persons has the same mind in the sense that what one divine person knows, all know as one; what one divine person wills, all will as one” (Ostler, 2001: 463-464). There is a unique oneness among the three members of the Godhead which, according to Jesus, in a Latter-day Saint understanding, all people must work towards: “the mind of any one member of the [Godhead] is the mind of the others, seeing as each of them does with the eye of perfection, they see and understand alike. Under any given conditions each would act in the same way... their unity of purpose and operation is such as to make their edicts one” (Talmage, 1988 [1915]: 41). They are thus “one God, meaning one Godhead” (McConkie, B. 1979: 511): “This unity is so

⁶⁰ This will be further explored in the implications section of this chapter (section 2.4).

profound that there is only one power governing the universe instead of three, for what one divine person does, all do as one” (Ostler, 2001: 464).

Latter-day Saints teach that this unity enables clarification to be given to some of the words (in both the *Book of Mormon* and the Old Testament) given by the premortal Christ (who is identified by Mormons as Jehovah) which are presented as if from the Father through divine investiture of authority.⁶¹ The Father has allowed Jesus to speak to various prophets as if he were the Father: “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God” (Isaiah 44:6; see also Moses 1:1-6). The First Presidency in 1916 explained the principle of divine investiture of authority:

In all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labours as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father’s name; and so far as power, authority and Godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father... None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ (The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 2002 [1916]: 17-18).

This divine investiture of authority could also be extended to the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints believe that when the Holy Ghost prompts people, or offers guidance, he is doing so because of

⁶¹ The identification of Christ as Jehovah is explored in section 2.2b (ii).

the authority received from the Father.⁶² Thus, in Latter-day Saint belief, whatever one member of the Godhead speaks it is as if the Father had spoken because of the unity of purpose and mind.⁶³

The unity of the Godhead expands the definition of salvation within a Latter-day Saint theology of religions to mean a unity of individuals with the Godhead: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17: 21). Salvation must be understood, in a Latter-day Saint view, as a completion of the unity with the Father, Son (and Holy Ghost).⁶⁴ The unity of relationship between the Godhead, as replicated in the relationship with humanity, must be based on a proper understanding of who each person is and their relationship to each other. As such, orthodoxy becomes crucial to salvation as a reflection of an honest relationship based on truth.

⁶² This will be explored more fully in section 3.2.

⁶³ As creations of the Father (see section 2.2b) Latter-day Saints are subordinationist. It has been suggested that this divine investiture of authority is the development of an early modalism within Mormonism (Widmer, 2000). Modalism suggests that God is indeed one, but appears as three different forms- Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and was declared heretical by the Christian Church in 381CE (Tanner, 1990). However, arguing against this developmental theology Bruening and Paulsen (2001) suggest that there are so many examples of anti-modalist sentiment in both *the Book of Mormon* and the *Book of Commandments (Doctrine and Covenants)* that it cannot be countenanced:

Similarly, Doctrine and Covenants XCI: 3 (D&C 76:19–23), which was received on 16 February 1832, provides one of the clearest examples of this distinctly antimodalistic language. Not only does this passage describe Jesus Christ and God the Father as two distinct persons in two distinct locations, but this is also the testimony of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon: “We beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness. . . And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him, that he lives; for we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the only begotten of the Father”. If Christ is the Father, as modalists claim, how does Christ ascend to himself? Or sit at his own right hand? (Bruening & Paulsen, 2001: 115).

⁶⁴ How this is possible and what it means will be considered in the next section of this chapter (section 2.2a (iv)).

2.2a (iv) The nature of salvation as unity

Latter-day Saints believe that there is a pool of intelligences that are eternal, from which the Father created the pre mortal spirits of his children, thus all people are literally spirit children of God: “Regarding the ultimate identity of man, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that man as a primal intelligence is eternal. Likewise the spirit-elements that compose his Divinely-sired spirit and the matter elements that compose his physically-sired body are eternal” (Madsen, 1970: 23-24). Madsen continues: “Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self existent principle... There is no creation about it” (Madsen, 1970: 24-25). This would include Jesus as the Firstborn of the Father.

Christ as a finite being with an infinite mission is a concept that Latter-day Saints find coherent with the belief in the Father and his origins:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. That is the great secret... It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God and to know...that he was once a man like us... God himself, the father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ (Smith, J. 1938: 345-346).⁶⁵

Latter-day Saints accept that for humanity God is infinite and eternal, but in actuality he is also a created being. If a Latter-day Saint were being exact, because of the pool of intelligences which are eternal, then the Father, Son and all of humanity are infinite. This means that a part of them (intelligence) has always existed.⁶⁶ In this way not only the Father and the Son, but also the

⁶⁵ Smith’s statements are non-canonical “but they are so widely accepted by Latter-day Saints” that its official status is moot when faced with this acceptance (Robinson, 1997a: 85). McConkie suggests that the Father has presided over this universe for a period of 2,555,000,000 years (McConkie B. 1980: 2).

⁶⁶ “Intelligence or the light of truth... was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). “The mind or the intelligence which man possesses is co-equal [co-eternal] with God himself” (Smith, J. 1938: 345).

Father and humanity, can be seen to be of the same species and co-eternal. “In the Mormon view... divinity and humanity are constituted of the same nature. God has the same ontological status as humans for both are, in their individual essences, uncreated and backwardly eternal. God is not different in kind from humans... it seems consistent to assert that divinity and humanity form a continuum rather than a dichotomy” (Ostler, 2001: 472-473).⁶⁷

Salvation as a unity with the Godhead is therefore possible, as exemplified through the life of Christ. Christ became one with the Father through obedience to his commandments and the aligning of his thoughts and goals to the Father. As joint heirs with Christ, Latter-day Saints believe that to receive the same inheritance of Christ (salvation), they must strive to develop this unity throughout their lives (and even beyond). Latter-day Saint beliefs about prayer are an example of how this unity is important for the development of a person’s relationship with Christ:

As soon as we learn the true relationship in which we stand toward God (namely, God is our Father, and we are his children), then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part (Matt. 7: 7-11). Many of the so-called difficulties about prayer arise from forgetting this relationship. Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other (BD: Prayer).

Latter-day Saints believe that the example Christ set, in terms of his eternal destiny and the way he achieved the unity with the Father, is a crucial outworking of a christology. To an extent, in

⁶⁷ In light of this Latter-day Saints have the view that humanity can become gods. In recent years this has been the subject of some discussion in mainstream Christian theology in terms of *deification* and *theosis* (see Paulsen, 2006). This does not affect the pre-eminent position of the Father. Latter-day Saints believe that the Father is both infinite and eternal. Any suggestion that they believe differently, or that their beliefs affect God’s omniscience, omnipresence or omnipotence would be met with vigorous denials. Robinson has argued that eternal suggests from “before the ages” to the end of the age, and in this context suggests that he agrees “completely with Evangelicals about the eternality of God” (1997a: 90). Similarly the corporeality of the Father and the Son place no limitations on them as they are able to be everywhere present through the influence of the Spirit and the light of Christ (a theme to be returned to in section 3.3a).

this way, Latter-day Saints could be seen to adopt an exemplarist christology, in that Christ provided the ultimate example. However, Latter-day Saint christology goes beyond this in teaching that certain aspects of his work could only be carried out by him (and not followed by humanity) because of his nature throughout his existence. This understanding of salvation reinforces a christological exclusivism; if a person is to receive salvation they must develop a relationship with Christ during mortality to hope for a continuation of that relationship beyond the grave. Furthermore, Latter-day Saints believe that to receive salvation a person must know what, and behave as, Christ taught (including a proper understanding of the nature of Christ within the Godhead, and in relationship to humanity). It is to an examination of these things to which this chapter now turns.

2.2b The Nature of Christ

The unity of the Godhead is maintained within Mormonism but does not include a belief in the principle of *homousios*. The persons of the Godhead are “are individual beings, separate and distinct one from another and yet alike in form and substance and purpose” (Hinckley, 2002: 91). The relation of the Son to the Father is an area in which a high christology could be seen to be diluted. Since Christ is a creation of the Father, he is eternally subordinate and, as such it might affect his ability to perform his work and make him unworthy of worship (see Blomberg, 1997). The implications of this subordinationism needs to be explored further. In Latter-day Saint belief Christ is a creation of the Father, he is described throughout scriptures as the “Firstborn of the Father” (see for example D&C 93: 21).

Christ stands apart from the rest of humanity as the “only begotten” of the Father (John 3: 16 see also Moses 2: 26), but he is also the elder brother of all humanity (see Hunter, 1981). This makes Christ eternally subordinate to the Father: “Thus the Father is viewed as the generator and sender, as the source or font of the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. The latter

two may be fully divine persons, but they are derivatively so in dependence on the Father” (Ostler, 1996: 123). As the “only begotten” Son, Latter-day Saints teach that Christ is wholly God and wholly man; he was subject to the temptations and trials of humanity through his mother Mary, but was able to overcome all through his Heavenly Father. Just as a child is wholly the child of both of his parents, this is so with Christ, Latter-day Saints believe that were it not so Christ could not be the Saviour and exemplar for humankind. Had he been singularly divine, he could not have died; conversely had he been singularly human he could not have overcome death. The two natures of Christ unite in Latter-day Saint teaching: “The nature of Christ is like a coat woven in two colours—the threads of neither colour can be removed without destroying the whole garment” (Heidenreich, 1974: 13). To establish Christ’s divinity, it is necessary to examine his pre-mortal existence; to establish his humanity, his mortal experience.

2.2b (i) Christ’s Divinity and Humanity

Latter-day Saints assert Christ possessed his divine status in his pre-mortal existence. How Christ is fully God and the manner of the process of his deification remain mysteries to Latter-day Saints: “How this was done I do not know any more than I know what it means when the Nicene Creed says that the Son ‘was begotten not made’” (Keller, 2005: 348).⁶⁸ Latter-day Saints believe that he progressed “grace for grace. And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first” (D&C 93: 12-14). Through his obedience Christ became fully God- Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament:

⁶⁸ Card (2010) has argued that the term “mystery” is not one that could be adopted within Mormonism. He suggests that Latter-day Saints “expect to understand all things eventually” and as such have no mysteries in their theology (7). In the current context, taking account of Card’s argument, the process of deification has not been revealed within Mormonism and remains a mystery yet to be explained.

Jesus Christ was and is God the Creator, the God who revealed Himself to Adam, Enoch, and all the antediluvian patriarchs and prophets down to Noah; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of Israel as a united people, and the God of Ephraim and Judah after the disruption of the Hebrew nation; the God who made Himself known to the prophets from Moses to Malachi; the God of the Old Testament record, and the God of the Nephites. We affirm that Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah, the Eternal One (Talmage, 1988 [1915]: 32).

The Book of Mormon similarly teaches that Christ was the God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament:

And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (1 Ne. 21:26).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ While identifying Christ as the law giver, these passages are open to the interpretations of Alexander (1980) and Widmer (2000) of modalism or a mainstream Trinitarianism. Indeed, Alexander has argued that “before about 1835 the LDS doctrines on God and man were quite close to those of contemporary Protestant denominations” (1980: 24). Kirkland (1984) goes further and has argued that the Jehovah-Christ doctrine is again a developmental doctrine that is ambiguous at best in the teachings of Smith: “With the interchangeability of the roles of the Father and the Son in earliest Mormon theology, it is impossible to identify specifically Joseph’s first few Jehovah references as either the Father or the Son” (Kirkland, 1984: 37). However, Kirkland argues that the Christ- Jehovah doctrine is not one that Smith ever taught or would have recognized. For modern Latter-day Saints this would be hard to accept. Certainly Smith’s understanding of Christ as Jehovah may have developed over time, but it could not be something (as Kirkland argues) created in 1915 with the teachings of Talmage as illustrated by writings in the Doctrine and Covenants:

We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in colour like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, *even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father* (D&C 110: 2-4 dated 1836 emphasis added; see also D&C 38:1 dated 1831).

This passage (and others) were written by Smith; even though the *Book of Mormon* may be interpreted by some to refer to a developmental Trinitarian theology with today’s accepted theology being read into them, these passages from the Doctrine and Covenants identify Jehovah (the God of Israel) and Christ as the same being. Kirkland seems to gloss over the scriptural basis of the doctrine preferring to argue that for the period of the 19th Century Latter-day Saint theology was speculative (and uses the Adam-God

McConkie has explained that Christ was not always God but that:

[b]y obedience, by righteousness, through faith, over long ages and eons, this Firstborn of the Father, our Elder Brother, advanced and progressed until he became like unto God in power, in might, in dominion, and in intelligence. He became and was “the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity” (Mosiah 3:5). Then it was that he, under the Father, became the Creator of worlds without number (McConkie, B. 1982: 32).

As outlined earlier, because of the will of God, Christ became God from this time: “it is not only Jesus’ incarnation that made him God the Son, but his designation by the Father to be the Son ‘in the beginning’” (Robinson, 1997: 136).

Latter-day Saints believe Jehovah / Christ became the God of Israel, the Creator of the world, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When a Latter-day Saint reads the Old Testament account of the dealings of Israel with their Lord and their God they believe they are reading of the pre mortal Christ as Jehovah. It was Christ who created the earth under the direction of his Father (Heb 1:2 see also Abraham 3:23-24); delivered the law to Moses on Sinai (3 Ne. 15:5);

debate as an example) and that the Jehovah-Christ doctrine was a part of this speculation. Talmage’s exposition draws on passages of scripture and harmonizes earlier teaching about the separate natures of Elohim (the Father) and Jehovah after the period of speculative (not scriptural) theology of Brigham Young. This does not deny the prophethood of Brigham Young; rather some things that he taught were not as a prophet but speculation. This is more fully explored in the writings of Clark:

There have been rare occasions when even the President of the Church in his preaching and teaching has not been “moved upon by the Holy Ghost”. You will recall the Prophet Joseph [Smith] declared that a prophet is not always a prophet... This has happened about matters of doctrine (usually of a highly speculative character) where subsequent Presidents of the Church and people themselves have felt that in declaring the doctrine, the announcer was not “moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (1979: 73).

spoke with and blessed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all of the Prophets of the Old Testament (3 Ne. 11:14 and D&C 136:21).⁷⁰

Christ's growth from "grace to grace" to a point of divinity has important implications for a construction of a theology of religions; it provides a signpost to the nature of salvation and the possible eternal destiny of the creations of the Father.⁷¹ It is suggestive of a continuum along which Christ progressed in knowledge and understanding; if Christ progressed in this way, then it is possible that all of humanity go through a similar process. This continuum of knowledge will be central in an exploration of a Latter-day Saint theology religions and as such will be returned to throughout this thesis.⁷²

While stressing the divinity of Christ, it would be impossible for Latter-day Saints to accept a docetic understanding of his life and mission. Christ was truly human, but this does not lessen his status to a mere man with a fulness of the Spirit resting upon him as suggested by Ebionism (Dantas, 2005). How is it possible for a created being to be fully God and yet fully human? In terms of a Latter-day Saint christology, this central tenet is linked with the belief that God is corporeal. The corporeality of God is an element of Latter-day Saint belief that has attracted much criticism (see for example Blomberg, 1997a) but has been a central teaching

⁷⁰ Christ's role in salvation history is not limited to first century Palestine and beyond, for Latter-day Saints he has been intimately acquainted with creation since before the foundation of the world. With power to create the world, make the sun to stand still and the other activities of the God of the Old Testament, Latter-day Saints would recognize a God who is fully divine, and therefore capable of providing salvation for all. The Gospel of Christ becomes extended to include all of history. This understanding of Christ in the Old Testament, and the eternal nature of the Gospel, becomes crucial in a discussion of holy pagans with regard to a theology of religions (see section 4.3d).

⁷¹ The doctrine behind such a possibility will be explored in the constructive section of this chapter (2.3), which will then lead to an exploration of the nature of a fulness of salvation in the implications section (2.4).

⁷² Especially in section 5.2a.

since the First Vision (see Paulsen, 1995-1996).⁷³ The premortal Jehovah “voluntarily abased himself, or, rather, emptied himself of all his divine power, or enfeebled himself by relying upon his humanity and not his Godhood, so as to be as other men and thus be tested to the full by all the trials and torments of the flesh” (McConkie, B. 1981c: 88n1). In Latter-day Saint thought Christ developed grace for grace during mortality. For Latter-day Saints Christ developed into the powers of godhood throughout his life and also acted in the office of the Son by forgiving sins, raising the dead and speaking for the Father. Mormonism rejects any abdication of his divinity for his entire mortal life; Christ may have been subject to mortality to enable him to fulfil his mission but the “enfeebling” of a mortal experience was gradually overcome throughout his life:

Be that as it may, no one could mask his godhood. One might clothe his spirit with flesh and blood, wrap him in mortal garb, draw the veil of forgetfulness across his mind, but no one, absolutely no one, could rob him of his divinely inherited traits. They could not be buried in his mortal frame. They could not be silenced. Every moment of every day his godly attributes were etching themselves on his outer shell... We do not know with exactness when Christ became aware of his divine mission, but consciousness of his godhood was emerging at an early age (Callister, 2000: 64-65).

It was, however, with his Resurrection that Christ achieved a fulness of the Father by receiving an eternal and incorruptible body.⁷⁴ The fulfilment of Christ’s deification in the Resurrection

⁷³ Some historians have argued against the historicity of an early dating of the belief, but Paulsen (1995-1996) answers these questions in what could be seen as a statement of Latter-day Saint orthodoxy.

⁷⁴ The importance of the Resurrection as a criteria for perfection (receiving a fulness of the Father) is shown by two contrasting passages from the New Testament and the *Book of Mormon*:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect (3 Ne. 12: 48).

from mortality raises implications, similarly, found in the exploration of Christ's divinity.⁷⁵

Christ's humanity and divinity were crucial to the fulfilment of his work— without either he would not have been able to fill his role as Saviour. The nature and implications of the scope of this atonement needs exploring in greater detail to develop a christology and theology of religions.

2.2b (ii) Christ's divine sacrifice as a human

Latter-day Saint scriptures highlight that the sacrifice necessary for salvation required “not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10).⁷⁶ Similarly, in reflecting on his sacrifice Christ says that “I, God have suffered these things for all...” (D&C 19:16). For the sacrifice to be efficacious for eternity and for all humanity, it needed to be of a God. However, certain elements of the atonement (including the succouring, temptations and death) needed to be carried out by a human. In Latter-day Saint teaching, the atonement of Christ has specific events that enable this sacrifice to have eternal consequences.⁷⁷ These events include the cross and the tomb, however, Gethsemane adopts a greater significance and “distinctive... emphasis” within Mormonism (Davies, 2000: 44).

Between the two events, Latter-day Saints believe, that Christ was resurrected enabling him to add himself to the definition of perfection in the *Book of Mormon* passage. This does not, however, contradict the Godhood of Christ before mortality; he achieved Godhood because of the designation by the Father. He was not made “perfect” or received of the fulness of the Father until the Resurrection.

⁷⁵ The implications, about the nature of salvation as unity and becoming “joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8: 29), will be further explored in the final two sections of this chapter (2.3 and 2.4).

⁷⁶ The infinite and eternal nature of the sacrifice refers both to its effects (discussed later) and also to its offering (Jesus, as the Son of God).

⁷⁷ These specific events do not negate the atoning role of his whole life; rather these events are the main focus of the atonement.

Latter-day Saint teaching identifies two mortally insurmountable obstacles in a person's progress towards becoming joint heirs with Christ: spiritual death (separation from God) and physical death (separation of the body from the spirit). Latter-day Saints believe that from the foundation of the world there was a plan established; sometimes called "the plan of happiness" (Alma 42: 8 see also v16) or the "plan of salvation" (Jarom 1: 2, Alma 42: 5 and Moses 6: 62), and that this plan required a Saviour from the beginning. In Latter-day Saint belief not only does God pre-exist the foundation of the world, but so do all the inhabitants of the earth. It is taught that people lived before they came to this earth, not in the sense of a reincarnation but as individual spirit children of their Heavenly Father in a pre-mortal existence (Abraham 3). People are the same person in mortality as in the pre-existence, but with a physical body and a "veil of forgetfulness" that came upon them as they were born:

In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her own destiny as an heir of eternal life (The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995: 1).

Before the organization of the world, Latter-day Saints believe, there was a Council in Heaven in which God's plan was put before all his children to enable their progression. This plan involved people being proved and tested, enabling humanity to return and live with God if they kept their "estate" (Abraham 3: 26). Jesus Christ volunteered to be the Saviour, while Satan presented an alternative plan which would force obedience and give him the glory. The Father's plan was accepted with Christ chosen to fill this role of Saviour (Abraham 3: 27).⁷⁸ Knowing that spiritual

⁷⁸ Satan's plan was to restrict the agency of people and claim the glory of God.

death would occur through sin, Jesus presented himself to suffer for the sins of the world, allowing agency to be an integral part of the plan. Jesus became the Saviour from the beginning “prepared from before the foundation of the world” (Moses 5: 57) to redeem his people (see Ether 3: 14), including “every being who will ever live on any of the millions and millions of earths in the vast universe which he helped to create under the direction of our Father in Heaven” (Skinner, 2002: 55). This sacrifice enables Christ to petition the Father because of “the blood of thy Son which was shed” to “spare these my brethren that believe on my name” (D&C 45: 4-5).

In the atonement the dual natures of Christ intersected. His human nature enabled him to suffer: “in order to satisfy the demands of divine justice and redeem fallen man, Christ sacrificed the attributes and powers of both physical and eternal life which he possessed on earth. In this way, Jesus made an ‘infinite and eternal’— not only a sinless human— sacrifice” (Andrus 1968: 417). Christ’s entire mortal experience (not just the last hours) became a part of his atonement in order that he could suffer “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people... that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11-12).⁷⁹ This image of Christ experiencing mortality to assist humanity

And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honour... Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power;... (Moses 4: 1, 3).

This plan did not, however, involve any sacrifice on Satan’s part (see Top, 2001).

⁷⁹ It could be argued that the context of this scripture suggests that it is the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and the cross that is meant, rather than his whole life. However, the use of verse 11 as context suggests that the whole of his mortal experience has part in the atonement. It is important to note, however, that while Christ may have been subject to these experiences (including temptation) he never succumbed.

through the travails of life will be explored in greater detail in an exploration of the purposes of the atonement. At this point, the atoning nature of his whole life for “his people” suggests that, for a theology of religions, the scope may be more restrictive or expansive depending on the definition of who his people are. Also of note for a theology of religions is the impact of Christ on a person’s everyday life, and how this is possible through Christ when a person adheres to a religion outside of the “true and living Church”.⁸⁰

During the concluding events of his mortal life, Latter-day Saints teach that Christ emptied himself of all divine powers again in Gethsemane so that his sacrifice was efficacious.⁸¹ His divinity enabled the suffering to be borne; Latter-day Saints believe that so excruciating and infinite were Christ’s agonies that his divine nature held off unconsciousness and death, but not the pain. Talmage has explained:

Christ’s agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. ... It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, and syncope would have produced unconsciousness and welcome oblivion. In that hour of anguish Christ met and overcame all the horrors that Satan, “the prince of this world” could inflict (1988 [1915]: 613).

Latter-day Saints believe that the process of atonement for sins culminated on the cross:

⁸⁰ This will be explored in the implications section of this chapter (2.4).

⁸¹ The suffering part of Christ’s atonement took place not just on the cross but it had its beginning in Gethsemane for Latter-day Saints. Here Christ suffered for the sins and pains of humanity (McConkie B. 1985a).

The majesty and triumph of the Atonement reached its zenith when, after unspeakable abuse at the hands of the Roman soldiers and others, Christ appealed from the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness was the key to the meaning of all the suffering he had come to endure (Holland, 1992: 85).

The focus on an atonement for sins, in Latter-day Saint christology, has close links with a specific model of the atonement within mainstream Christianity.

The Latter-day Saint understanding of the atonement, most commonly taught and accepted (see for example Robinson, 1992), is the penal substitutionary model. In such a model the “fundamental issue is that of a legal penal transaction between God and Christ for the salvific benefit of humanity. As a righteous judge, God cannot allow his law to be broken without punishment. Christ’s sacrifice satisfies God’s requirements of justice” (Eddy and Bielby, 2006: 16). Latter-day Saints extend this understanding to incorporate the law of justice as something to which God is subject, but through the law of mercy he is able to satisfy.

...God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also...And if there was no law given, if men sinned what could justice do, or mercy either, for they would have no claim upon the creature? But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God. But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the Resurrection of the dead; and the Resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice. For behold, justice

exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved. What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. (Alma 42:15, 21-25 see also Alma 34: 15-16; D&C 88: 35, 40; Mosiah 15: 9; Morm. 6: 22)

When an individual sins, Latter-day Saints teach, there is a penalty to be paid. The only person who can pay that infinite price is the Son of God who was “bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5, see also Mosiah 14:5). The centrality of a substitutionary atonement is exemplified in the General Conference addresses where most focus on the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s sacrifice.⁸² In one such address, Packer gives the example of a creditor requiring payment of a debt. The debtor is unable to repay the debt until a third party steps in to meet the demands:

“I will pay the debt if you will free the debtor from his contract so that he may keep his possessions and not go to prison”. As the creditor was pondering the offer, the mediator added, “You demanded justice. Though he cannot pay you, I will do so. You will have been justly dealt with and can ask no more. It would not be just”. And so the creditor agreed. The mediator turned then to the debtor. “If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?” “Oh yes, yes,” cried the debtor. “You save me from prison and show mercy to me”. “Then,” said the benefactor, “you will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way. You need not go to prison”. And so it was that the creditor was paid in full. He had been justly dealt with. No contract had been broken. The debtor, in turn, had been extended mercy. Both

⁸² General Conference is a semi-annual event in the Church. At this event the General Authorities present messages that seem to be reflective of orthodoxy and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (see Johnson, 2005).

laws stood fulfilled. Because there was a mediator, justice had claimed its full share, and mercy was fully satisfied (1977: 54–55).⁸³

This suggests for Latter-day Saints a conscious acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Mediator. As such, it has important implications for the construction of a theology of religions. If Christ's sacrifice is eternal in its coverage of creation (including humanity) then the suggestion could be made of a wideness in the mercy of God with regard to who receives salvation. However, if knowledge about Christ, and a conscious acceptance of him, is essential to salvation then a very restrictive view of salvation is presented. This classical Mormon view only suggests one facet of the atonement. Discussion of the atonement in light of further models evident in traditional Christianity may extend a Latter-day Saint understanding of the centrality of Christ and his work. These models may provide clarification of the dichotomy of Christ's atonement: its universality and restrictive nature.⁸⁴

Christ's atonement continued into the events of the Resurrection. Latter-day Saints believe that physical death places an obstacle to receiving eternal life ("the kind of life God lives" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997: 301)), as God has a body to which his spirit is eternally bound. Latter-day Saints teach that, at death, the body and spirit separate and humanity is blocked from receiving salvation. The events of the Resurrection broke the bonds of death for all of humanity; this Resurrection of Christ is a "universal gift... of every man, woman, and child who lives, has ever lived, or ever will live, on the earth" (Holland, 1992: 84; see also Alma 11: 42-43; 1 Cor 15:22). This universality of Resurrection required a being

⁸³ The importance of a relationship with the mediator requires further exploration and will be returned to in an examination of the compassion theory of the atonement.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of further models of the atonement see the constructive section of this chapter (see section 2.3c).

that had the capability to die (Christ as human) but also the ability to take up his life again (Christ as divine) (see John 10:17-18).

The events of the atonement of Christ exemplify, for Latter-day Saints, that Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life”. Christ’s sacrifice and Resurrection enabled him to say that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). There is no other, for Latter-day Saints, who could have opened up the way. It is Christ with whom they are determined to build a relationship, so that they can return, cleansed from sin, to their Father in Heaven:

And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins? (Alma 5:26-27).

As outlined earlier, this relationship and cleansing is a result of a conscious relationship with Christ. For Latter-day Saints this relationship begins with a knowledge of Christ and his relationship within the Godhead, and with humanity:

Knowledge is necessary to life and godliness. Woe unto you priests and divines who preach that knowledge is not necessary unto life and salvation. Take away Apostles, etc., take away knowledge, and you will find yourselves worthy of the damnation of hell. Knowledge is revelation. Hear, all ye brethren, this grand key: knowledge is the power of God unto salvation... A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than

many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God (Smith, J. 2007: 265-266).

In Latter-day Saint teaching knowledge is a key to salvation (as it underpins beliefs and actions). McConkie (1987) explores this understanding of knowledge and the implications it has for Latter-day Saints. A knowledge of truth is important, but there are truths that are more important than others; for example, in this chapter thus far a knowledge of the character of God, a knowledge of the divinity and atonement of Christ, and a knowledge of the First Vision are seen to be crucial first steps in gaining salvation. The help that this type of knowledge is to salvation is exemplified in Latter-day Saint scripture:

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the Resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, ~~he~~ will have so much the advantage in the world to come (D&C 130: 18-19).

The path to salvation is a way of knowledge. Latter-day Saints believe the knowledge and truth necessary for salvation is not restricted to knowledge of facts; knowledge of God refers to understanding who he is, but also refers to acting on this knowledge:

In the context of the Bible, knowledge— in its highest spiritual sense— had little to do with the intellect but was rather a matter of the heart. The Old Testament references to a man knowing God and to a man knowing his wife— meaning conceiving a child with her— both use the same Hebrew word (*yada*). As a man was to leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and become one flesh with her, so he was to leave the things of the world, cleave unto his God, and become one with him. As faithfulness in marriage was essential to the nurturing of love, so faithfulness in keeping Gospel covenants was understood to be necessary in obtaining a knowledge of God. As love of

spouse was strengthened in sacrifice and devotion, so the knowledge of God was obtained in living those covenants with exactness and honour (McConkie, J. 1987: 230).

Having a knowledge of Christ, involves having a correct understanding of his nature and work which then leads to a correct relationship with Christ. Latter-day Saints believe that one cannot have a true relationship with someone that is built on a misunderstanding of who they are and what they do. This is crucial in developing the classical christology in that to know Christ is to be in a relationship with him, evidenced through faithfulness to his commandments and covenants.⁸⁵ A person cannot accept Christ fully without a knowledge of truths: thus, orthodoxy of belief and behaviour becomes imperative for a Latter-day Saint.⁸⁶

2.2c Interim Conclusion

Within Latter-day Saint classical christology, the knowledge of who Christ is and the work that he performed is paramount. The First Presidency, in 1935, taught that these beliefs “must be accepted by mankind if they shall save themselves: ... that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Only Begotten, the very Son of God, whose atoning blood and Resurrection save us from the physical and spiritual death brought to us by the Fall” (Clark, 1965-1975, vol 6: 4-5).⁸⁷ A knowledge of Christ and the acceptance of his work are essential to salvation. Beliefs that run contrary to the christology of Mormonism are seen to place obstacles in the spiritual development of people, and their acceptance of Christ. The implications of these teachings for a

⁸⁵ The nature of these covenants is explored in section 3.2c of the chapter on pneumatology.

⁸⁶ Some observers have noted an increased emphasis within the Church on orthodoxy where certain parameters have been established. This is not necessarily seen as a strength, however, but as a dilution of the personalistic appeal of Mormonism (Toscano, 1994) This is highlighted in the excommunication of a number of individuals for continuing in their teaching of apostate ideas (Anderson, 1993). However, doctrinal orthodoxy on central issues such as the person of the Son have been present throughout Mormon history (see for example *The Articles of Faith*).

⁸⁷ The First Presidency at this point was Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, and David O Mackay.

Latter-day Saint theology of religions suggest that only through an acceptance of Christ and his work (as taught in a Mormon christology) can salvation be hoped for; however, this needs further unpacking when compared to the universal salvific desire of God which is evident through the universal scope of the atonement.

Similarly important to the salvation of humanity is the building of a relationship with Christ. Salvation is the fulfilment of this relationship which is consciously begun during mortality. The whole purpose of mortality, for Latter-day Saints, is to build this relationship through knowledge and actions (without negating the bestowal of grace). As this happens incrementally, a Latter-day Saint can be seen to “work out” their salvation within the grace of Christ (Morm. 9: 27). This conscious relationship would seem to exclude the possibility of salvation among non-Christian religions (and also other Christians with their flawed understanding of the nature of Christ).

This infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of humanity raises important implications for a theology of religions.

Latter-day Saints emphatically teach that the extent of this Atonement is universal, opening the way for the redemption of all mankind, non-Christians as well as Christians, the godless as well as the god-fearing, the untaught infant as well as the fully converted and knowledgeable adult (Holland, 1992: 84).

Christ suffered for all, not just Latter-day Saints or repentant souls. If there is no limited atonement, then the way of salvation is open for all.⁸⁸ It would seem that a Mormon christology is, at the same time, both restrictive and universal. In the following section of the chapter these apparent contradictions will be explored in greater depth, in such a way as to widen the scope of

⁸⁸ The implications of this universal nature of the atonement demands exploration in the final section of this chapter (see section 2.4).

salvation thinking about a theology of religions from the perspective of Latter-day Saint christology.

2.3 Constructive Mormon Christology

There are elements of the classical position that have been identified as needing further exploration before a firm conclusion can be reached about the impact a christology has on a theology of religions. This exploration should enable any possible harmonization of the two opposing strands of universality and restrictivism to be found. There have been suggestions throughout the classical section that while Mormonism is christologically exclusivist, especially as regards the importance of knowledge about Christ and a relationship with him, there may be scope for a more expansive view within a theology of religions. If Christ developed “grace for grace” and this is replicated within humanity’s existence then is there a possibility that non-Latter-day Saint religions are at an earlier stage of grace?⁸⁹ This constructive section should then enable a fuller treatment of the implications of a Mormon christology for a theology of religions.

2.3a Different Models of the Atonement

Within classical Latter-day Saint christology the justification for the narrowness of focus on the penal substitution model of the atonement, and the exclusion of other models, was the overwhelming attention given to it in Mormon writings about Christ’s sacrifice.⁹⁰ This can be seen to limit the role of Christ to a focus for the punishment of humankind and has been seen to limit any scope for salvation. However, there are other models of the atonement that may help

⁸⁹ Although the phrase “grace for grace” is not suggestive of Christ’s grace as typically understood, the phraseology and its possible dual meaning serves a useful purpose at this point of the thesis.

⁹⁰ See section 2.2b (i).

widen the impact and purpose of the work of Christ and have an influence in the construction of a theology of religions.

2.3a (i) Compassion/ Moral Influence

In the moral influence view of the atonement, “the atoning work of Christ is designed first and foremost to effect a change in human beings... The work of Christ chiefly consists of demonstrating to the world the amazing depth of God’s love for sinful humanity. The atonement was directed primarily at humanity, not God” (Edder & Bielby, 2006: 18-19). Through the fallen nature of humanity people refuse “to turn to God and be reconciled. Through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, the love of God shines like a beacon, beckoning humanity to come and fellowship” (Edder & Bielby, 2006: 18-19). Ostler argues, in a Latter-day Saint context, that the “purpose of the atonement in LDS scripture is to ‘bring about the bowels of mercy’ so that God is moved with compassion for us and we are moved with gratitude to trust him by opening our hearts to him” (2001: 235). In this argument Latter-day Saint theology goes beyond the traditional compassionate model of Abelard which draws humanity into a loving relationship with God, in that it also reconciles God to humanity. “The suffering that Christ experienced not only moves us with compassion for him, but it also moves him with compassion for us” (Ostler, 2001: 238).

Part of a Latter-day Saint understanding of the atonement is the necessity that God the Son became flesh so that he could “succour them in their infirmities” (Alma 7: 11-12). It was necessary for Christ to experience all of the trials of humanity to be a perfect example, but also to be able to bear the burdens of humanity. By rejecting the temptations he faced, Latter-day Saints believe that, Christ was not subject to the spiritual death caused by Adam’s transgression. Christ’s perfection enabled the relationship with the Father to be continued even during mortality. The Father’s purposeful removal (see Mark 15: 34), both in Gethsemane and Calvary,

was therefore a crucial part of the atonement for Christ as well as for humanity. Gethsemane was where Christ first encountered the effects of spiritual death, sin and the associated pains of mortality to the degree where he was left alone by the Father causing him to be “amazed” at the strength of sin (Mark 14:33). The moral influence model is a reflection of the Latter-day Saint belief that the atonement was for more than sin. This compassion theory of the atonement draws humanity into a relationship with Christ as a person realizes the impact of sin. The atonement also draws humanity into this relationship in every area of human life. Latter-day Saints feel that:

When we let go of our past and release the painful energy of alienation [and suffering], Christ experiences and receives into himself the pain that we have experienced to be transformed by the light of his love. If we refuse to let go of our past histories and the pain that arises from our sins, [sicknesses and infirmities] we will continue to experience that pain. If we let go of that pain, however, then Christ experiences the very pain we release, but we no longer have to. In his Passion we find compassion” (Ostler, 2001: 236).

In this understanding of the atonement the focus shifts from the eschatological and soteriological, to the importance of an on-going presence of Christ’s work in a person’s mortal life. A relationship with Christ is not purely to be gained through repentance and at judgement day but is to be developed in the act of living in mortality.⁹¹ With mortality being the basis of a

⁹¹ Mortality is an integral part of the plan of salvation taught within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mortality is, for Latter-day Saints, the opportunity to receive a mortal body, learn, and be tested:

With the many pressures of daily life, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the significance of mortality. Earth life is a time to learn. We obtain our bodies, tabernacles for our spirits, and then learn to control them (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998: 23).

When mortality is referred to in this thesis it encompasses all of the learning and testing experiences of mortal (earthly) existence. Morality forms a part of the test; as it reflects how a person’s choice are in line with the will of God. As such morality is an integral part of mortality.

relationship with Christ, it is possible to see the potential for an expansion of the scope of salvation. If a person lives in mortality (and people of every religion, and none, do) then, it could be argued, they have the potential to develop a relationship with Christ through the everyday experiences. This begins to have resonances of Rahner and his discussion of “anonymous Christians” (1969: 394). The acts performed by such anonymous Christians could be seen to be a response to the grace of Christ and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. As such, the possibility, of a hopeful judgement based on the experience of mortality has an important role in the formation of a theology of religions.⁹²

Although not explored in great detail in the devotional writings of Latter-day Saints, the moral compassion theory of the atonement is certainly a part of Latter-day Saint theology and its implications would not seem alien to a Latter-day Saint. Christ’s atonement experienced in his humanity builds a relationship with God that overcomes the effect of the Fall of Adam both in this life (sickness, infirmities, guilt for sin) and the next (sin and death) as the relationship with God is repaired. Had Christ’s sacrifice been only the sacrifice of a God then it may not have the same effect either on him (being able to suffer) or on humanity (drawing people to him through his suffering).⁹³ Thus the christological focus in this understanding of the atonement helps a person realize their goal of knowledge of, and unity with, Christ; which, as already identified, are crucial in a Latter-day Saint understanding of salvation. As such, it could also be seen to reinforce the exclusivist teaching, within Latter-day Saint theology, that the formation of a personal relationship with Christ is a necessary criterion for salvation. Only a person who experiences the atonement and Christ’s presence in their life can become joint heirs with him in

⁹² As a confluence of christology, pneumatology and eschatology this discussion will be delayed in this thesis until chapter 4 when its full implications and theological background can be explored.

⁹³ The reality of Christ’s suffering is important for a Latter-day Saint in understanding his atonement. Only through the possibility of his experiencing suffering can Christ provide succour to those who suffer from pains, infirmities, and sins (see Alma 7: 11-12).

this life and the next. However, as noted, such an understanding of the atonement could also be used to dilute the exclusivism of classical Latter-day Saint teaching, by suggesting that a relationship with Christ is possible through the actions of mortality having the potential to reflect the grace of Christ in a person's life. How far a relationship with Christ is possible for someone outside the covenantal relationship has major implications for the construction of a theology of religions.

2.3a (ii) Christus Victor/ Ransom theory

The main reconciliatory purposes of the atonement in Latter-day Saint theology are explored fully in the penal substitution and compassion theories. However, the necessity of the atonement is also explored by Mormons through the Christus Victor model. This view of Christ's work argues that the atonement is "a Divine conflict and victory; Christ– Christus Victor– fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering" (Aulen, 1969: 4). There are elements of this competition underlying a Latter-day Saint view of the world; humanity is "free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men (Christ), or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Ne. 2:27). Latter-day Saints see choice as an integral part of the plan of salvation;⁹⁴ choice is the main differential between the Father's plan and Satan's plan presented at the Grand Council of Heaven before the foundation of the world (see Abraham 3: 22-26). The opportunity to experience mortality was dependant on the choice of individuals to follow Christ.

⁹⁴ Choice is more commonly referred to, in Latter-day Saint writings, as agency:

...[A]gency is the ability and privilege God gives us to choose and "to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon". Agency is to act with accountability and responsibility for our actions. Our agency is essential to the plan of salvation (Hales, 2010: 24).

The Christus Victor model, while retaining Christ victorious (as he was in the premortal existence), also extends to include ransom model of the atonement. The ransom can also refer to the fate of humanity without Christ; where, through his atonement Christ is able to save the world from “bondage”. *The Book of Mormon* explores the consequences of there being no plan of redemption in place. Christ provides an opportunity to be rescued from suffering and bondage:

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents... O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster, yea, that monster, death and hell... (2 Ne. 9:9-10).

It is not, however, sufficient in Latter-day Saint theology to suggest that a ransom needs to be paid to the devil, conjuring up images of a cosmic battle between two rival forces, which could be one interpretation of the ransom model of the atonement. Satan is a creation of God in a similar way to the spiritual creation of all of humanity in the pre-existence and as such cannot be on a par with God.⁹⁵ Satan is in contravention of God’s plan and seeks to thwart it, but cannot be seen to possess humanity. Nor can he be seen to have a claim on humanity that needs purchasing. Rather the captivity and battle for the souls of humanity is seen to be a part of the test that mortality provides. In this life people are seen to be in bondage to Satan as they give heed to his temptations which is removed through a reliance on the atonement. Ostler has made this point: “there is an actual being (the devil) who exercises power over us who seeks to bring us into bondage to our passions and warped values because he wants to make us miserable. The

⁹⁵ This has been the subject of recent debate and criticism of Latter-day Saints. In the 2008 Republican Presidential Primary campaign Huckabee charged Romney with believing Jesus and Satan were brothers. This is quite true when premortal organization of spirits is examined, but only insofar as humanity is all a family as creations of God.

atonement in fact frees us from such bondage. However, we cannot take the devil's desire for our misery seriously... for no one could reasonably believe that God must pay off the devil to buy our souls back" (2001: 262).

If there is a ransom to be paid, within Latter-day Saint teaching, it is the law of justice that needs appeasing (see Alma 42:14). Without this ransom (the atonement) "all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made" (Alma 34:9). This would have been the fate of humanity without Christ, but not because of the power of the devil, rather because of the demands of justice.⁹⁶

The Christus Victor model provides a wider possibility for the application of the atonement. Within classical Mormon christology the conscious choice of the individual is paramount for the activation of the atonement. However, consistent with Latter-day Saint teaching on the universality of the sacrifice of Christ, the demands of justice for every part of creation have been met. This opens up the possibility that those outside of conscious choice are covered through the atonement. Greggs (2007) observes that Barth, with a similar view of the exclusivity of Christ, proclaims Christ as victor and opens up the way for a universal salvation.⁹⁷ Against everything else (including the reality of evil) Christ emerges as victor; and provides the universal salvation of humankind. Webster has argued that:

[W]e must not allow worries about the universal scope which Barth claims for the history of Jesus to crowd out that the most basic function of his presentation is to stress Jesus' *particularity* before his cosmic pertinence (Webster, 2002: 42).

⁹⁶ This aspect of Christ's work will be explored in greater detail in the chapter on eschatology (chapter 4).

⁹⁷ Greggs notes the "apparent impasse between a theology which seems to point in a universalist direction and one which simultaneously denies that charge" (2007: 199). This same description could be made of the dichotomy in Latter-day Saint christology: the universality of Christ's sacrifice and salvific will, versus the restriction of salvation to those who consciously accept Christ.

It therefore becomes possible in Barth's "Jesus as Victor" theology to declare Christ's particularity alongside all of humanity's salvific destiny. However, the question as to whether this is compatible with, or possible for, Latter-day Saint theology needs further unpicking in light of a description of salvation and those who inherit such.⁹⁸ If it is possible that Christ could be "victor" and all receive salvation then the implications for a theology of religions would be important.

The issue of a conscious choice to follow Christ, within Latter-day Saint teaching, remains an obstacle to such an understanding and cannot be discarded on a whim. The example of the natural world, however, could be used to support the possibility a universal salvation. Within Latter-day Saint teaching the whole of creation is involved in the plan of salvation:

He [God] formed every plant that grows, and every animal that breathes, each after its own kind, spiritually and temporally— "that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal, and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual". He made the tadpole and the ape, the lion and the elephant but He did not make them in his own image, nor endow them with Godlike reason and intelligence. Nevertheless, the whole animal creation will be perfected and perpetuated in the hereafter, each class in its "distinct [sic; "destined" in D&C 77:3] order or sphere," and will enjoy "eternal felicity". That fact has been made plain in this dispensation (D&C 77:3) (Smith, Winder, & Lund, 2002: 30).

Latter-day Saints believe that the natural world will be "perfected"; this is through no choice of their own (not having reason and intelligence) but is because they fulfil the measure of their creation.⁹⁹ Nature may have different criteria for salvation because of its lack of reason, but

⁹⁸ See section 4.2.

⁹⁹ The example of how the dust of the earth fulfils its purpose is given in the *Book of Mormon*:

could it be possible in Latter-day Saint teaching to extend a similar teaching to those without the opportunity of choice in Christ? It may, therefore, be possible for a human to fill the measure of its creation without conscious acceptance of Christ. The conditions for salvation will need to be more fully explored to say with any certainty whether this would be accepted with Latter-day Saint teaching.¹⁰⁰

2.3b Conclusion

A Latter-day Saint exploration of the Christus Victor model of the atonement can be understood on two levels in Latter-day Saint theology. Firstly, Christ's atonement satisfies the demands of justice (though to call the atonement a victory over justice would be incorrect as justice remains upheld). Secondly, Christ's atonement helps humanity emerge victorious in this life from the temptations and bondage of Satan. To overcome Satan it would seem that a choice has to be made to follow Christ; again this suggests a conscious choice which has implications for a theology of religions: does the choice have to include the entirety of the Latter-day Saint understanding of Christ, thus condemning many Christians and most of the religions of the world? With a constructive element added to the Christus Victor model in Latter-day Saint theology it may be possible to posit a way for the particularist emphasis on Christ to be reconciled to the universal salvific intent of the atonement. When linked with the moral compassion model of the atonement, it may be further possible, to suggest that a person fulfils the measure of their creation (without explicit belief) in the experience of mortality. To what extent this is possible; and if there are any criteria which a mortal experience, without confession of Christ, could be judged demands further development.

O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth. For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God (Hel. 12:7-8).

¹⁰⁰ See sections 4.2 and 4.3.

2.4 Implications of a Mormon christology for a theology of religions

The classical christological debates... were as much about salvation as about the nature of God and the person of Christ. “Jesus is Saviour” was assumed throughout, so the debate about him was always inseparable from the theology of salvation (Ford, 1999: 107).

The implications that the person and work of Christ has for the salvation of humanity have crucial importance in laying the foundations for the construction of a theology of religions. In a Latter-day Saint christology only through a true understanding of the nature of Christ, his work and the scope of his atonement can a person receive the fullest extent of the blessings available (salvation). There are a number of facets to a person’s response to Christ in Latter-day Saint teaching. Firstly a person must know about Christ (his position as Firstborn of the Father, the second member of the Godhead and the Saviour of humankind). Secondly, they must develop a relationship with him through an acceptance of the atonement and a living in accordance with his will. Thirdly, they must accept him as Saviour to have their sins forgiven and the pains of this life removed.

There are important elements of a Mormon christology which stand in direct contradiction to traditional christologies in mainstream Christianity (not least the distinction between Christ’s place in the Trinity and the Godhead). However, the implications of the christology for a theology of religions is to some degree comparable. These are useful for the progression of this thesis as an outworking of these beliefs since a theology of religions in a Latter-day Saint setting has not been attempted previously. Mainstream theologies of religion can provide a framework for an exemplification of Latter-day Saint belief.

The main thesis of Latter-day Saint christology is the uniqueness of Christ and this seems to be most closely reflected in the writings of Christian theologians traditionally placed within the boundaries of exclusivism (see for example Kraemer, 1956; and Farmer, 1954).

Thus “to pose the problem correctly from the standpoint of Christianity” is in my view only possible when one gets back to the non-derivative, to what is original, to the primary “given” of Christianity, to that which produced Christianity and was not itself made or produced by it. Now that is neither a doctrine nor a principle. It is the Person of Jesus Christ. Here, I would say is an objective criterion (Kraemer, 1999: 246).

Christ is the only source of salvation and truth for exclusivists and Latter-day Saints. Some writers traditionally described as exclusivists use a “totalitarian” approach to Christianity and religions. In using this term Kraemer suggests that when someone phenomenologically examines religions they should be analysed in their totality rather than split into small parts to be examined comparatively and in isolation:

Every religion is a living, indivisible unity. Every part of it- a dogma, a rite, a myth, an institution, a cult- is so vitally related to the whole that it can never be understood in its real function, significance and tendency, as these occur in the reality of life, without keeping constantly in mind the vast and living unity of existential apprehension in which this part moves and has its being (Kraemer, 1938: 135).

Hence, for example, the Buddhist concept of *dukkha* cannot be fundamentally related to the concept of sin within Christianity because it is not rooted in the revelation of Jesus Christ. While there may be superficial similarities, the understanding of such beliefs to the faith communities are poles apart. Kraemer does not deny that there are similarities and points of contact between religions, but they remain revelation (Christianity) coming into contact with human constructions (other religions). In these similar beliefs are found the “highest flights, the

sincerest contrition” without the revelation of Christ, “in the sphere of a lofty moralism or spirituality. Nowhere do we find a radical repudiation of every possible man-made spiritual world, which is the uncanny power of the Gospel” (Kraemer, 1956: 334). This approach is supported by Farmer who suggests that:

As organized totalities they [the religions of the world] are radically discontinuous with Christianity. And they are from our point of view, manifestations of unredeemed human sin, no matter what fine elements may be in them. They are organized round a wrong centre, built upon a wrong foundation, not being organized round or built upon God’s giving of Himself for us and our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord (Farmer, 1939: 323).

Christ is the normative criterion within Latter-day Saint belief for salvation and truth. *The Book of Mormon* teaches “every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil” (Moro. 7: 16-17). This passage suggests that any system of belief not reflective of the truths of Christ and the restored Gospel taught by Latter-day Saints is devil inspired.

For a theology of religions one would expect this exclusivist position to have an emphasis on mission as a first step in relationships with other religions. Newbigin gives a caricature of the missiological implications of such an approach, suggesting that if all are damned outside an explicit confession of Christ in this life then mission is imperative, meaning that “it would be not only permissible but obligatory to use any means available, all the modern techniques of brainwashing included, to rescue others from this appalling fate” (Newbigin, 1999: 349). While not going to such an extent, the missiological imperative in Latter-day Saint belief is paramount: “Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man

who hath been warned to warn his neighbour” (D&C 88: 81). Of the Church’s three main purposes one is to “proclaim the Gospel (Kimball, S.¹⁰¹ 1982: 4).¹⁰²

All of us ... bear the sacred obligation to bless the nations and families of the earth by proclaiming the Gospel and inviting all to receive by proper authority the ordinances of salvation. Many of us have served as full-time missionaries, some of us presently are serving as full-time missionaries, and all of us now are serving and will continue to serve as lifelong missionaries (Bednar, 2005: 44).¹⁰³

Missionary work by the Church is undertaken “to help the children of God fulfil a condition prescribed by our Saviour and Redeemer. We preach and teach in order to baptize the children of God so that they can be saved...” (Oaks, 2009: 2). This emphasis on missionary work suggests that an exclusivist position is indeed the correct development of the various elements of a Mormon christology.¹⁰⁴

Condemning systems of religion as false could be a logical outworking of the implications of a Latter-day Saint christology for a theology of religions. The importance of correct knowledge explored throughout the current chapter suggests that however well-meaning other religions may be, they are built on a false premise and are therefore completely false themselves, with no hope of salvation.

¹⁰¹ More than one Mormon Leader has the surname Kimball.

¹⁰² Numerous other examples can be found to provide evidence for mission’s importance. A recently published mission manual *Preach My Gospel* is written to help members to fulfil their purpose as missionaries (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004).

¹⁰³ In April 2010 with a membership of 13, 824, 854 the Church had full time 51, 736 missionaries serving with a year end total of 280, 106 convert baptisms (Hales, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ The further impact that mission has on a development of a theology of religions and inter-faith dialogue will be explored in detail in section 5.3.

Christ's unique position as an objective criterion, however, does not necessarily have to have purely negative connotations for other religions. Those scholars (Rahner, 1969; Pinnock, 1996; Pannenberg, 1968) who find themselves described as inclusivists (or even at the blurring of the lines of exclusivism and inclusivism) still hold Christ to be paramount in a salvation theology:

Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right... This relationship of God to man is basically the same for all men, because it rests on the Incarnation, death and Resurrection of the one Word of God become flesh (Rahner, 1999: 291).¹⁰⁵

Farmer's interpretation of this normative criterion (drawing on tradition which goes back to Schleiermacher) rejects the dialectical theology of Kraemer and suggests that while Christianity is unique there is evidence of continuity in other religions. He sees a loving God at work "seeking all the time to break through the cloud of man's darkness and sin and not altogether failing" (Farmer, 1939a: 180) leading to the possibility of appreciating "positive elements in other faiths, recognizing that God has been at work among them" (Pinnock, 1992: 109). This is perhaps because of Farmer's personalist approach: for him, "God is personal... is love and seeks 'with undeviating patience, and at any cost', the reconciliation of all persons" (Partridge, 1998: 349-350). This inclusive approach states that the revelation of Christ is unique, but allows God the opportunity to commune with others of his creation on a personal level, which enables a more personalist approach within different forms of Christianity as well as within other world religions.¹⁰⁶ Thus, if people are condemned or saved they are condemned or saved as individuals

¹⁰⁵ Rahner (and others) quoted in this work use the term "men" and "man" where in today's world more inclusive language is used. I have not edited their words but recognize that they referred to both men and women.

¹⁰⁶ Pinnock (1996) extends his theology of religions outward from the work of Christ to include the work of the Spirit. This will form a basis for the extension of this thesis in chapter 3 of this work.

and not as members of totalities, which softens the image of God. However, it must be noted that, whether a personalist or totalitarian approach to religion is taken, God still condemns the followers of that religion.

The constructive section of this chapter has developed the possibility that God is at work in a person's life irrespective of whether they are to be found within the Church or elsewhere. Without negating the need for knowledge is there a possibility of God communing with others outside of the covenantal relationship? By extension from this, could mortal experience provide knowledge (so crucial to Latter-day Saints) necessary for salvation? These questions will need extensive exploration in the context of a Latter-day Saint pneumatology as the source of knowledge is discussed.¹⁰⁷ A similar possibility is developed when a personalist approach to an individual's relationship with Christ is explored. If a person responds to a partial understanding of who Christ is, it may motivate them to perform certain actions to evidence that knowledge. An example might be a person choosing to be baptized in response to a reading of the accounts of Jesus' baptism in the Gospels. Is it possible that they are evidencing a yearning, or a portion of the grace of Christ, in their physical action?¹⁰⁸ It may, therefore, be possible to posit a preparatory role of incomplete teachings about Christ, and actions that result therefrom.

For Latter-day Saints, Christ is the criterion against which all others must be judged; without a true knowledge of him and unity with the Godhead all are condemned. However, the infinite extent of his atonement and the belief that salvation is possible for all, through this sacrifice, raises important questions as to the nature of judgement,¹⁰⁹ and the extent of the

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 3.

¹⁰⁸ The importance and function of ordinances such as baptism are explored in section 3.2. At this point baptism is used only as an example of an action that might be evidence of responding to a knowledge about Christ.

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 4 (especially 4.3c).

revelation given to those outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹¹⁰ The Christus Victor model of the atonement provides a possible basis for enabling Christ to remain supreme but for the scope of salvation to be expanded. The moral influence model of the atonement could, similarly, be used in suggesting that people could behave in such a way that reflects an unknowing belief in Christ. The possibility of anonymous Christians evidenced through moral action could suggest a knowledge of Christ sufficient to save. All of these extensions to the classical Mormon understanding of theology need to be further explored in light of the basis for judgement,¹¹¹ and the knowledge that people receive,¹¹² before a theology of religions can be constructed.

¹¹⁰ See chapter 3 (especially 3.2c and 3.3a).

¹¹¹ Eschatology: see chapter 4.

¹¹² Pneumatology: see chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Pneumatology

3.1. Introduction

The chapter on Latter-day Saint christology explored a dialectical tension between the particularism evident in the knowledge about, and acceptance of, the person and work of Christ; and a more hopeful strand with regard to the universality of the work of Christ. This chapter will explore the various facets of a Mormon pneumatology. Pneumatology is not a word that is used within Mormon writings, but Mormon theology does elucidate a work of the Holy Ghost that is evident in the world and in the Church that can be explored.¹¹³ In constructing a Latter-day Saint pneumatology one is faced with a paucity of specific material; with the exception of a small number of books the Holy Ghost has not been the subject of a systematic analysis except as it impinges on other areas of doctrine such as christology, missiology and ecclesiology.¹¹⁴ While being critically linked with other areas, the role of the Spirit in individual and institutional practice is an area which needs exploring in much greater depth than has been done previously. The extent to which the Holy Ghost has been ignored is exemplified in the writings of Davies; he argues that in certain aspects Mormonism can be seen to be distinctly binitarian (2010), concluding:

...that, in the starkest and most unqualified of terms, the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit has been of primary historical significance within practical Mormon living but of secondary importance within its technical theology... If, as appears possible, sufficient LDS thinkers engage with mainstream Christian theologians over major doctrinal issues it is

¹¹³ The Holy Spirit is a term used interchangeably with the Holy Ghost in Latter-day Saint teaching. There is no difference between what is meant (see also Davies, 2009: 23-24). Further uses of the term “spirit” and “spirit of the Lord” will be explored in 3.3.

¹¹⁴ Specific works are generally devotional in nature (for example McConkie and Millet, 1989).

likely that this gap between Mormon statements and articles of faith on the one hand and its charter paradigmatic narratives on the other will become increasingly integrated or that one will simply give way to the other (2009: 38).¹¹⁵

The constructive section of this chapter will utilize both classical Mormon pneumatology, and pneumatologies from mainstream Christianity to fully explore the work of the Spirit as it impinges on a theology of religions.¹¹⁶ How the work of the Spirit can assist in the formation of a theology of religions will also be explored in the implications section of the chapter.¹¹⁷

3.2 Classical Mormon pneumatology

3.2a Third Member of the Godhead

In the exploration of Mormon christology, the nature of the Son and the relationship between the Godhead was explored in significant detail.¹¹⁸ The relationship of the Holy Ghost to the Father and the Son is an extension of the unity of purpose, mind and action found between the Father and the Son themselves.¹¹⁹ In a similar way to the Son, the Holy Ghost is a creation of the Father; but, significantly, he does not have a physical body:

¹¹⁵ In this binitarian discussion Davies goes further than is appropriate in relation to current Latter-day Saint practice, and relies on aspects of *The Lectures of Faith* (Lundwall, nd) and their attendant outworkings. However, the argument does recognize that more thought needs to be given to the work of the Holy Ghost.

¹¹⁶ See section 3.3.

¹¹⁷ See section 3.4.

¹¹⁸ See section 2.2a.

¹¹⁹ This is perhaps best explained in a mainstream pneumatology where Pinnock has argued that “The Spirit is more than God’s presence: the Spirit is a Person in fellowship with, but distinct from, Father and Son. Called the Paraclete in John’s Gospel, the Spirit is personal agent, teacher and friend” (1996: 25). This seems to, unknowingly, explain the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son in Latter-day Saint belief.

“The Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones,” however, “but is a personage of Spirit” (D&C 130:22). He is thus a spirit man, a spirit person, a spirit entity. He lives and moves and has his being separate and apart from his fellow Gods. His spirit body is in all respects comparable to the kind of a body that the Lord Jehovah possessed before that beloved and chosen one made flesh his tabernacle by the process of mortal birth.¹²⁰ These three persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost -- are one God or in other words, one Godhead, because of the perfect unity that prevails among them in all things (McConkie, B. 1985: 253-254).¹²¹

Aside from knowing that the Holy Ghost “is a member of the Godhead, with great power and authority, with a most wonderful mission which must be performed by a spirit” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 39),¹²² the existence of the Holy Ghost prior to the creation of the world and his eternal destiny are areas that have not been developed within Latter-day Saint teaching. There is a specific injunction not to speculate on these areas: “In this dispensation, at least, nothing has been revealed as to [the Holy Ghost’s] origin or destiny; expressions on these matters are both speculative and fruitless” (McConkie, B. 1979: 359). However, it is possible to posit that in the same way that Christ achieved Godhood premortally, so too did the Holy Ghost. In the Godhead the Holy Ghost is subordinate to both the Father and the Son and he acts under their direction (Church Education System, 2004: 11).

¹²⁰ The “spirit body” has reference to the one created by the Father in the premortal existence to house the intelligence that is eternal. Thus, a body in Latter-day Saint teaching does not just refer to a physical body (either mortal or immortal).

¹²¹ Swanson (1989) argues that Joseph Smith initially taught a binitarian concept of God- the Father and the Son. The Spirit was the “mind” of the two, and that it was not until 1841 that he (the Holy Ghost) was referred to as a spirit personage. However, rather than accepting this developmental doctrine of the Holy Ghost, Smith himself claimed to have “always declared... the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage” (Ehat & Cook, 1980: 378). This claim of Smith also seems to be supported in the earlier parts of the Book of Mormon: “for I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another” (1 Ne. 11:11).

¹²² The “wonderful mission” of the Holy Ghost is explored below (3.2c).

In Latter-day Saint thought the Holy Ghost is not everywhere present: “As a Spirit personage the Holy Ghost has size and dimensions. He does not fill the immensity of space, and cannot be everywhere present in person at the same time” (Smith, J., 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 38). Joseph F Smith also stated:

The Holy Ghost as a personage of Spirit can no more be omnipresent in person than can the Father or the Son, but by his intelligence, his knowledge, his power and influence, over and through the laws of nature, he is and can be omnipresent throughout all the works of God” (Smith, J. F. 1939: 73-75).

Despite this, Latter-day Saints believe that the Holy Ghost is able to communicate with all people.¹²³

3.2b The Gift of the Holy Ghost

The most obvious manifestation of the Holy Ghost in Latter-day Saint teaching is within a discussion of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The President [of the USA, Martin Van Buren] asked the Prophet [Joseph Smith] what difference there was between the Prophet’s Church and the other Churches of the world. The Prophet answered: “We have the correct mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands”. Then he said: “We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Richards, 1979: 76).

The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost by the recipient throughout their lives (as long as that person remains worthy of it).¹²⁴ The blessings

¹²³ How this is accomplished will be explored in detail in the constructive section of this chapter (3.3).

¹²⁴ The Holy Ghost is seen by Latter-day Saints to remain with a person while they are worthy of it, or do not sin. When a person sins they withdraw themselves from the Spirit (see Mosiah 2:36). The Holy Ghost

that Latter-day Saints believe they receive through the gift of the Holy Ghost will be explored in greater detail.¹²⁵ This reception of the Holy Ghost, through the physical ordinance of confirmation, is a crucial step in joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Article of Faith 3).¹²⁶ Latter-day Saints believe that the ordinance of baptism by water must be followed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost through confirmation and the laying on of hands:

You cannot get the gift of the Holy Ghost by praying for it, by paying your tithing, by keeping the Word of Wisdom—not even by being baptized in water for the remission of sins. You must complete that baptism with the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet said on one occasion that you might as well baptize a bag of sand as not confirm a man and give him the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands. You cannot get it any other way. The man who is confirmed receives, in addition to this Spirit of Christ, the companionship of the third member of the Godhead. Therefore, he is back again in the presence of God, through the gift of the Holy Ghost (Richards 1979: 41).

A person is considered a member of the Church after having received the baptism of water, followed by the baptism of fire. When people receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, they are first of all confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and then the words are said: “receive the Holy Ghost” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006:

cannot abide with that person until repentance is undertaken and the atoning blood of Christ takes effect again in the person’s life.

¹²⁵ See section 3.2c.

¹²⁶ Latter-day Saints only use the word sacrament when referring to the Eucharist. All “sacraments”, in the mainstream sense of the word, are described as ordinances.

30).¹²⁷ The importance of both of these ordinances and their relation to salvation demands further attention in constructing a theology of religions.¹²⁸

The gift of the Holy Ghost, in Latter-day Saint teaching, can only be received by the laying on of hands “by one having authority” (Article of Faith 5), but there are examples of people receiving manifestations of the Holy Ghost prior to the administration of the ordinance in scripture and Latter-day Saint writings. These manifestations should not be confused with the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost and its associated right of constant companionship. For example:

Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him (Smith, J. 1938: 199).¹²⁹

Evidences of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost prior to baptism are prevalent throughout Latter-day Saint teaching and culture: “Joseph Smith did not have the gift of the Holy Ghost at the time of the First Vision, but he was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost; otherwise, he could not have beheld the Father and the Son” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 42-43).

¹²⁷ The confirmation takes place immediately following baptism for a child of record (a child aged 8 with one or more parent being a member of the Church), or a short period time afterward, usually in the next sacrament meeting, for a baptismal candidate aged 9 or over. The necessity of being a member of the Church prior to reception of the gift of the Holy ghost is evident in the words of the confirmation.

¹²⁸ A wider exploration of ordinances and their importance will be developed in section 3.2c and their implications for a theology of religions in section 3.4.

¹²⁹ Cornelius was “probably the first gentile to come into the Church not having previously become a proselyte to Judaism” (BD: Cornelius) who received the truth of the Gospel before baptism. The differentiation between the Holy Ghost before and following baptism is echoed in the writings of Pinnock: “In experience the Spirit may be manifested before baptism, as with Cornelius, but water remains the public sign of the Spirit’s coming (Acts 10:44-48)” (1996: 124).

Rector and Rector (1971) collected together a number of conversion stories which highlighted manifestations from the Holy Ghost that converts had experienced prior to being baptized (Palmer, 1978). It is important to note, however, that if the manifestations were not heeded, then the Holy Ghost would withdraw its influence. “Every man (sic) can receive a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, even when he is out of the Church, if he is earnestly seeking for the light and for the truth. The Holy Ghost will come and give the man the testimony he is seeking, and then withdraw; and the man does not have a claim upon another visit or constant visits and manifestations from him” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 42). The teaching of prevenient promptings of the Holy Ghost is more inclusive than could be supposed. Latter-day Saints accept that the Holy Ghost provides manifestations to those outside the Church; they may serve a preparatory role but the Holy Ghost is not limited to the Church. If the religions of the world serve a preparatory role in terms of truth, could it therefore be argued that elements of these religions are manifestations of the Holy Ghost? This may be a step too far with regard to the evidence. Most of the teachings that could be utilized to offer a “hope” are based on an *individual’s* search for truth and fulfilment. Nothing is said regarding a religion as a whole being inspired by the Holy Ghost. The difference between a hopeful individual preparation and a possible collective preparation by the Holy Ghost will need to be explored in further detail below.¹³⁰ The personal preparation that the Holy Ghost serves could still be used as a hopeful basis for judgement, being partially based on the knowledge a person acquires.

The “multiple intensities” of the Holy Ghost can go some way to providing a basis for a theology of religions (Greggs, forthcoming: 355). In a Mormon christology the importance of knowledge was explored; in light of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost finding fulfilment in the reception of the Holy Ghost, it seems as though Latter-day Saints would suggest that spirit-given truths find their fulfilment in the ordinances of baptism and confirmation. In constructing a

¹³⁰ See section 3.2c.

theology of religions this is suggestive of the fulness of truth only being available in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Therefore, all other religions are, at best, incomplete and awaiting fulfilment by the Holy Ghost. A person can go so far, but must receive the Holy Ghost within the constraints of the ordinances of baptism and confirmation in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹³¹

3.2c The Roles and Work of the Holy Ghost

In Latter-day Saint thought the Holy Ghost has a specific purpose and a number of roles within the Godhead and in relation to humanity: sanctification, sealing, effecting a change of heart, revelation and guidance.¹³² Latter-day Saints believe that the first two functions take place exclusively within the context of the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon members of the Church. Revelation and guidance may be evident outside of the gift of the Holy Ghost, but are more commonplace within:

¹³¹ The importance of knowledge and ordinances need much further exploration (section 3.2c). Following this exploration, their implications for a theology of religions will be developed in the final section of this chapter (3.4).

¹³² There are other functions of the Holy Ghost identified in Latter-day Saint belief, such as charismata and comfort. For Latter-day Saints, the image of the Holy Ghost as “Comforter” brings great hope to those who are alone and desperate, the “Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love” (Moro. 8:26). The blood of the atonement acting through the Holy Ghost can mend the broken hearted and bring comfort to those who are seemingly comfortless.

With regard to charismata:

In 1831 Joseph [Smith] received by revelation instruction to the early members of the Church concerning the gifts of the spirit. These gifts were a direct resumption of New Testament charismata: the faith to heal and be healed, the gift to speak in tongues, the working of miracles, the gift of prophecy, visions and the discerning of spirits (D&C 46:17-26). Later, Joseph included the resumption of New Testament charismata as one of the Church’s thirteen basic Articles of Faith (A of F 7). Latter-day Saints believe that these gifts have been restored in their fulness, and as they were a blessing to the lives of primitive Saints, so are they now (Paulsen, 2006: 41).

The gifts listed in scripture (see D&C 46 and 1 Cor 12) are not the definitive list of charismata: “these are by no means all of the gifts. In the fullest sense, they are infinite in number and endless in their manifestations” (McConkie, B. 1985: 314).

While these roles are crucially important for Latter-day Saints they do not add to the debate surrounding the construction of a theology of religions and so will not be explored in detail.

A newly baptized member told me what she felt when she received that gift. This was a faithful Christian woman who had spent her life in service to others. She knew and loved the Lord, and she had felt the manifestations of his Spirit. When she received the added light of the restored Gospel, she was baptized and the elders placed their hands upon her head and gave her the gift of the Holy Ghost. She recalled, “I felt the influence of the Holy Ghost settle upon me with greater intensity than I had ever felt before. He was like an old friend who had guided me in the past but now had come to stay” (Oaks, 1996: 59).¹³³

This section will explore these roles in turn and identify areas for development and possible implications for the construction of a theology of religions.

3.2c (i) Revelation and Guidance

For Latter-day Saints, revelation and guidance are the most discussed, and central roles of, the Holy Ghost. The centrality of these functions is based on biblical and restoration sources:

The Bible’s teachings about the Holy Ghost are reaffirmed and elaborated in the Book of Mormon and in modern revelations. The Holy Ghost is the means by which God inspires and reveals his will to his children (e.g., D&C 8:2–3). The Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and of the Son (see 3 Ne. 28:11; D&C 20:27; D&C 42:17). He enlightens our minds and fills us with joy (see D&C 11:13). By the power of the Holy Ghost we may know the truth of all things (see Moro. 10:5). By his power we may have the mysteries of God unfolded to us (see 1 Ne. 10:19), all things which are expedient (see D&C 18:18; D&C 39:6). The Holy Ghost shows us what we should do (see 2 Ne. 32:5). We teach the

¹³³ The activity of the Holy Ghost outside of the Church will be explored in greater in detail in section 3.3.

Gospel as we are directed by the Holy Ghost, which carries our words into the hearts of those we teach (see 2 Ne. 33:1) (Oaks, 1996: 59).

Revelation functions on two levels for Latter-day Saints; firstly there is the belief that the Church as the body of Christ is led by revelation of the Holy Ghost:

Through the whisperings of the Holy [Ghost] we know that the true head of this Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, does communicate with us through [the living Prophet]. How blessed we are as Latter-day Saints to know that God can speak to us through our living prophet today and give us guidance and instruction and encouragement so that we may continue, just as the Lord's true Church continues, steadfast and confident on the path that leads us back to Him (Jensen, 1998: 12).¹³⁴

Institutional revelation is one of the foundational beliefs of Latter-day Saints: "Jesus in His teachings says, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. What rock? Revelation'" (Smith, J. 1938: 273).¹³⁵ The Church is led by a Prophet under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The guidance of the Holy Ghost, through the Prophet to the entire Church, is replicated on local levels; a Stake is guided under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost by the Stake President and a ward in the same way by the Bishop. Both of these ecclesiastical officers function within the constraints established by the Prophet as guided by the

¹³⁴ Examples of revelation include the book of *Doctrine and Covenants* which is a collection of revelations, similarly Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible was not a result of going back to the texts in their original languages, but as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "The Prophet was given access to an understanding of scriptural matters that both sanctifies and soothes the soul—an understanding that comes from the Holy Ghost. He translated through his knowledge of the language of revelation, the language of the Spirit" (Millet, 1986: 28).

¹³⁵ McConkie suggests that what is described here as one type of revelation (institutional) could be split into two: "*institutional revelation*... [meaning] the canon of scripture known to Latter-day Saints as the standard works" and "*stewardship revelation*... [meaning] those inspired promptings, in their multitude of forms, that are granted to sustain us in our various offices and callings as we labour in the Lord's vineyard" (McConkie J. 1984: 10) However, for the purpose of this thesis the umbrella term which incorporates both types described by McConkie will suffice.

Holy Ghost: “it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves . . . if any person have a vision or a visitation from a heavenly messenger, it must be for his own benefit and instruction; for the fundamental principles, government, and doctrine of the Church are vested in the keys of the kingdom” (Smith, J, 1980 [1902], vol 1: 338). The directing of an institution (the Church) by the Godhead through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has implications that need fully exploring in terms of ecclesiology. The necessity of the Holy Ghost for the continued guidance of the Church has implications for other religions who are not so guided. A full exploration of these beliefs will be attempted below in the formulation of a Latter-day Saint ecclesiology.¹³⁶

The second way that revelation functions for Latter-day Saints is on an individual level.¹³⁷ Members of the Church feel that their lives should be, and are, led by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost functions on an immanent level as a part of the gift received at confirmation. A member of the Church is entitled to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost as a guide, sometimes occurring as an “uninvited” warning voice.¹³⁸ Lund lists numerous examples of people receiving impressions to perform actions as an evidence of the “real world” application of the Holy Ghost (Lund, 2007: 30-126). In this sense, the Holy Ghost is seen as both a revealer and a guide. The guidance focuses around protection from evil; leading a person to do good; and also influencing

¹³⁶ See section 3.2d.

¹³⁷ Oaks calls the two functions outlined, the “personal line and the priesthood line” (2010: 83).

¹³⁸ In using the term “uninvited” what is meant is uninitiated by the recipient. An example of this type of revelation can be found in *The Book of Mormon*:

And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban; but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him. And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had taken away our property. And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief (1 Ne. 4: 10-13).

a person's decisions about certain issues. The guidance from the Holy Ghost that is sought, by Latter-day Saints, must be done so by asking "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moro. 10:4). The process of revelation to receive the answer through the Holy Ghost is described in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground (D&C 8: 2-3; see also D&C 9: 8-9).

The events that could occasion such seeking of the Holy Ghost include a person asking if the *Book of Mormon* is true (Moro. 10:3-5); if their choice of spouse is correct (Lund, 2007: 149); career decisions; questions about doctrine; and anything in which people might wish to "seek the will of God" (McConkie, J. 1978: 70). Latter-day Saints believe that revelation and guidance from the Holy Ghost are crucial to the successful living of life:

Nephi taught this: "If ye will ... receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Ne. 32:5). What a remarkable privilege and promise! Lorenzo Snow said that it is the "grand privilege of every Latter-day Saint ... to have the manifestations of the spirit every day of our lives ... [so] that we may know the light, and not be grovelling continually in the dark". And his sister Eliza R. Snow declared: "You may talk to the [Saints] about the follies of the world ... till dooms day, and it will make no impression. But ... place them in a position where they will get the Holy Ghost, and that will be a sure protection against outside influences". *We* have been promised the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead and hence the privilege of receiving revelation for our own lives. We are *not* alone! (Dew, 1998: 94).

This is an extension of the importance of a relationship with Christ throughout a person's life:¹³⁹ the unity with the Godhead that a person seeks is not just a relationship with Christ, but is extended to include the Holy Ghost. Every aspect of a Latter-day Saint's life should be lived in harmony with the revelations of the Holy Ghost. If accomplished, then a Latter-day Saint believes that eternal life will be their reward: "Salvation cannot come without revelation" (Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 3: 389). This revelation begins with the reception of a testimony that the Church is true but then continues throughout all aspects of a person's life. As a person receives and acts upon the truths revealed through the Holy Ghost, Latter-day Saints believe that they place themselves in a position to receive more revelation (see McConkie, J. 1984: 47): "And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost..." (D&C 109: 15). This scripture indicates that the fulness of the Holy Ghost is not received all at once: "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24). Eventually this revelation and relationship with the Holy Ghost, and its attendant results, will lead to salvation: "The only way that a soul can be saved is to live right and follow the promptings of the Spirit" (McConkie, B. 1964: 7). For Latter-day Saints, revelation from the Holy Ghost and responding to it is a crucial criterion of salvation indicating the faith a person has in Jesus Christ, and the relationship they have with the Godhead.

In this exploration of the revelatory and guiding role of the Holy Ghost, the focus has surrounded the *gift* of the Holy Ghost. However, in light of the discussion in the last chapter about progression in knowledge (and its replication in the discussion above surrounding the "fulness of the Holy Ghost"), the *preparatory role* of the Holy Ghost to the fulfilment in the reception of the gift of the Ghost demands further exploration as it impinges upon those outside

¹³⁹ Examined in sections 2.3b and 2.3c (i).

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁴⁰ The Holy Ghost, in his revelatory role, is thus essential for a person to gain salvation. However, this activity just seems to extend to those who have received of it through the confirmation ordinance and find themselves within the Church led, personally and institutionally, by the Holy Ghost. The knowledge and relationship inherent in the immanent role of the Holy Ghost is indicative of the exclusivism evident in christology. To receive salvation a person must have a knowledge and a relationship, both of which are only available in The Church of Jesus of Christ of Latter-day Saints.

3.2c (ii) Sanctification

In Latter-day Saint teaching one of the most important roles of the Holy Ghost is that of sanctifier. *The Book of Mormon* specifically identifies this role:

Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another; yea, will ye persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this Church, *having been sanctified by the Holy [Ghost]*, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance— (Alma 5:54 emphasis added; see also Alma 13:11-12).

For Latter-day Saints the blessing of sanctification through the Holy Ghost is available to all through the baptism of fire.¹⁴¹ Sin and carnality are taken away through the atonement of Christ with the active involvement of the Holy Ghost: “It is ‘by the blood’ (Moses 6:60) – meaning the blood of the Saviour– that we are sanctified. But it is through the cleansing medium of the Holy Ghost that the regenerating powers of that infinite atonement are extended to mortal man” (McConkie, J. & Millet, 1989: 110-111). By the power of the Holy Ghost, Latter-day Saints

¹⁴⁰ See section 3.3b.

¹⁴¹ The reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

believe that, iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every evil thing is burned out of the soul as if by fire; the cleansed person is literally born again of the water and the Spirit (see McConkie, B. 1979: 73). This is impossible without the Holy Ghost:

Man's natural powers are unequal to this task; so I believe, all will testify who have made the experiment. Mankind stand in some need of a strength superior to any they possess of themselves, to accomplish this work of rendering pure our fallen nature. Such strength, such power, such a sanctifying grace is conferred on man in being born of the Spirit — in receiving the Holy Ghost. Such, in the main, is its office, its work (Roberts, 1966: 170).

Sanctification, in Latter-day Saint teaching, is a process; it “is an ongoing work of the Holy [Ghost], one that deals with the gradual purification of my state” (Millet, 2005a: 158). As a person “endures to the end” (2 Ne. 31:20), they are able to continue further through the sanctification process which “consists in overcoming every sin and bringing all in subjection to the law of Christ” (Young, 1863: 173).

This process of sanctification entails the removal of sin and its replacement with Christ-like qualities. The Holy Ghost is not just a passive channel for the atonement. Rather, the Holy Ghost actively

quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form, and features. It tends to health, vigour, animation, and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves.

In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being (Pratt, P.¹⁴² 1978 [1855]: 61).¹⁴³

Sanctification by the Holy Ghost (through the atonement) takes place initially when a person is baptized and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. Sanctification through the atonement and the Holy Ghost is renewed each week in the sacrament (eucharist): “The process of cleansing and sanctifying through the baptisms of water and of the Holy Ghost can be continued weekly as we worthily partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” (Christofferson, 2001: 24). The importance of an ongoing relationship with the Holy Ghost throughout a person’s life is reiterated when discussing sanctification. Latter-day Saints believe that living close to the Holy Ghost, and partaking of the sacrament sanctifies a person’s soul, making them prepared to meet God on judgement day with clean hands and a pure heart:

And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day (3 Ne. 27:19-20).

It is impossible for this sanctification to take place without reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost. This can only be done “by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority” (Article of Faith 5). As such, only baptized members of the Church have the potential to be sanctified, and only those so sanctified can return and live with God and receive salvation. It is important to note that Latter-day Saints believe that these outward ordinances are not salvific in themselves;

¹⁴² There are two early apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the surname Pratt.

¹⁴³ This change will be explored further in 3.2c (iv) in a discussion of a change of heart.

they do “not forgive sins or save us... for salvation is in Christ the Person. Rather, baptism and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are channels of divine power that help to activate the power of God” (Millet, 2003: 76). The Holy Ghost is the active medium of the grace of Christ to make sanctification and salvation possible: “The Holy Ghost is the midwife of salvation. He is the agent of the new birth, the sacred channel and power by which men and women are changed” (Millet, 2005a: 146-7). The implications of this sanctifying role for the construction of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions seem to be fairly exclusivist in nature.¹⁴⁴

3.2c (iii) Sealing

In Latter-day Saint teaching the Holy Ghost is sometimes referred to as the “Holy Spirit of promise” (D&C 132:7),¹⁴⁵ which has a role in the sealing of all “covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations” (D&C 132:7). This function of the Holy Ghost is ratification of the covenants and ordinances that occur. Smith has explored this further and describes it as a “stamp of approval” promising the blessings of the covenants through a person’s faithfulness. If covenants are broken Latter-day Saints believe that the “Holy [Ghost] withdraws the stamp of approval” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 45). McConkie has used baptism as an example of this seal placed by the Holy Ghost:

An unworthy candidate for baptism might deceive the elders and get the ordinance performed, but no one can lie to the Holy Ghost and get by undetected. Accordingly, the baptism of an unworthy and unrepentant person would not be sealed by the Spirit; it

¹⁴⁴ Exclusivist in the sense that to receive salvation one must be clean from sin; to be clean from sin a person must be sanctified; to be sanctified a person must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and live according to its guidance; to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost a person must be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This will be explored further in section 3.4.

¹⁴⁵ Although this thesis, and Latter-day Saints, refer to the Holy Ghost, one exception is the description of his role as the Holy Spirit of promise. For this reason the terminology is retained.

would not be ratified by the Holy Ghost; the unworthy person would not be justified by the Spirit in his actions. If thereafter he became worthy through repentance and obedience, the seal would then be put in force. Similarly, if a worthy person is baptized with the ratifying approval of the Holy Ghost attending the performance, yet the seal may be broken by subsequent sin (McConkie, B. 1979: 362).

Latter-day Saints do not just apply this ratifying seal of the Holy Ghost to baptism but to all of the ordinances of the Gospel: baptism; confirmation; ordination to the Priesthood;¹⁴⁶ washing and anointing;¹⁴⁷ endowment;¹⁴⁸ and Temple marriage.¹⁴⁹ If these ordinances (and their attendant

¹⁴⁶ There are two divisions in the Priesthood within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: the Aaronic (Lesser) Priesthood and the Melchizedek (Higher) Priesthood (see D&C 84). Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood only takes place once, as does the conferral of the Melchizedek. However, within each priesthood are various offices which worthy males can be ordained to (the first three offices of the Aaronic priesthood have a minimum age; as does the first office of the Melchizedek priesthood). In the Aaronic Priesthood the offices are Deacon (age 12); Teacher (age 14); Priest (age 16); and Bishop (a man who has usually been married in the Temple and holds the office of High Priest in the Melchizedek priesthood). The offices of the Melchizedek Priesthood are Elder (age 18); High Priest; Patriarch; Seventy; and Apostle.

¹⁴⁷ An description of the washing and anointings is offered by Parry:

In response to a commandment to gather the saints and to build a house “to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings, and anointings”, these ordinances were introduced in the Kirtland Temple on January 21, 1836. In many respects similar in purpose to ancient Israelite practice and to the washing of feet by Jesus among his disciples, these modern LDS rites are performed only in Temples set apart and dedicated for sacred purposes (D&C 124:37-38; *HC* 6:318-19). Many symbolic meanings of washings and anointings are traceable in the scriptures. Ritual washings (Heb. 9:10; D&C 124:37) symbolize the cleansing of the soul from sins and iniquities. They signify the washing-away of the pollutions of the Lord’s people (Isa. 4:4). Psalm 51:2 expresses the human longing and divine promise: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (cf. Psalm. 73:13; Isa. 1:16). The anointing of a person or object with sacred ointment represents sanctification (Lev. 8:10-12) and consecration (Ex. 28:41), so that both become “most holy” (Ex. 30:29) unto the Lord (Parry, 1992: 1551).

¹⁴⁸ The endowment is seen by Latter-day Saints to be the giving of instruction and a gift. Young explained it in the following way:

Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell (Young, 1941: 416).

¹⁴⁹ Washing and anointing, endowment, and Temple marriage all take place within Latter-day Saint Temples.

covenants) are not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise then they “are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the Resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead” (D&C 132:7).¹⁵⁰ Latter-day Saints believe this seal is kept in place by a person’s righteousness and can be removed as a person withdraws themselves from the Spirit (see Mosiah 2:36). In order to receive eternal life a person must have the Holy Spirit of Promise sealed to their ordinances:

An act that is justified by the Spirit is one that is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words, ratified and approved by the Holy Ghost. This law of justification is the provision the Lord has placed in the Gospel to assure that no unrighteous performance will be binding on earth and in heaven, and that no person will add to his position or glory in the hereafter by gaining an unearned blessing (McConkie, B. 1985: 408).

In Latter-day Saint theology, a further condition for eternal life is to have received the various ordinances; these are efficacious only through the Holy Ghost because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The Holy Spirit of Promise (meaning the seal placed on a person’s baptism and marriage and kept there through righteousness) is a prerequisite to salvation; without it “he cannot obtain it [salvation]” (D&C 131: 3).

In discussing salvation, it is a requirement of Latter-day Saint theology for those who receive salvation to have these ordinances performed by proper authority:

...wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven... It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of--a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a

¹⁵⁰ The immediate context of the passage is marriage (D&C 131 and 132) but it can be applied to all ordinances.

dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah. This is a faithful saying. Who can hear it? And again, for the precedent, Matthew 16:18, 19: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (D&C 128: 8-10).

Latter-day Saints believe that people can only receive the Holy Spirit of Promise if the ordinances have been performed by proper authority, and thus can only be received in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The implications of such a particularist ecclesiology will be explored further,¹⁵¹ but the suggestion at this point is that there is no salvation outside of the Church as the ordinances are a prerequisite to salvation.¹⁵² Non-Latter-day Saint baptisms (and ordinances) are non-efficacious, and are a commentary on other religions not having the authority necessary to prepare adherents for eternal life. The issue of necessary authority and ordinances thus have important implications for the construction of a theology of religions.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ See section 3.2d.

¹⁵² A further development of this teaching is explored in post-mortem work in Latter-day Saint Temples. This aspect will be explored in detail in section 4.3b.

¹⁵³ See section 3.4.

3.2c (iv) Effect a change of heart

Latter-day Saints teach that through the process of sanctification the Holy Ghost makes a person a “new creature” (Mosiah 27:26; see also 2 Cor 5: 17; and Galatians 6:15).¹⁵⁴

The spiritual birth comes after the natural birth. It is to die as pertaining to worldliness and carnality and to become a new creature by the power of the Spirit. It is to begin a new life, a life in which we bridle our passions and control our appetites, a life of righteousness, a spiritual life. Whereas we were in a deep abyss of darkness, now we are alive in Christ and bask in the shining rays of his everlasting light. Such is the new birth the second birth, the birth into the household of Christ (McConkie, B. 1985: 282).

This process of becoming a new creature is best illustrated in *The Book of Mormon* following King Benjamin’s discourse.¹⁵⁵ The people who heard this last sermon went through the sanctification process; they humbled themselves and prayed the atoning blood of Christ would take effect in their lives. The Holy Ghost came upon them and filled them with joy; they experienced a change of heart and had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). The application of the atonement takes place initially when a person is baptized, when they are born again, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Through reception of the Holy Ghost a person can begin this mighty change of heart: “Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God” (Alma 13:11-

¹⁵⁴ The biblical scriptures refer to a new creature in Christ; as people receive of the blessings of the atonement of Christ through reception of the Holy Ghost; this assertion in the context of Latter-day Saint theology is valid.

¹⁵⁵ King Benjamin is a righteous king in early part of the Book of Mormon, who gathered his people together to deliver a last sermon. This sermon is variously described as one of “great gems on all our scriptures” (Maxwell, 1998: 16) and “one of the most powerful in scripture” (Reynolds, 2004: 17).

12). As with the sanctification process, the creation of a new person is a continual event: “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26). This continual renewal reflects the importance of developing the lifelong relationships with Christ and the Holy Ghost. Only through their influence can a person hope to become a new creature and receive salvation.

As the impetus for the change of heart, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, suggests that this process can only be fully realized within the Church of Jesus of Christ of Latter-day Saints. This restriction of the fulness of the work of the Holy Ghost extends a pneumatological exclusivism. To hope for salvation a person must be a new creature, and this is only possible by living a life in close relationship with the Holy Ghost.

3.2d Ecclesiology

The fulness of the work of the Holy Ghost can be seen to be focused around, and limited to, the boundaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁵⁶ The Church, therefore, plays a crucial role in Latter-day Saint belief and theology:

Mormon theology is essentially an ecclesiology. It is a theology of the Church established by prophecy through its two major priesthoods and its wider supporting organization. The deep underpinning of this ecclesiology lies in the doctrine of the Restoration itself, the teaching that God has, once more, given power to humanity to achieve divinity (Davies, 2003: 116).

¹⁵⁶ This is not to suggest that the Holy Ghost is limited, rather that specific roles that he plays are limited to members of the Church.

The structure of the Church is believed to have been established by God as a means for the achievement of salvation: “Ultimate salvation, in Mormon terms, is a corporate venture; it depends on relationships to other people” (Nuckolls, 2004: 315). For Latter-day Saints the Church “was no afterthought, no accidental outcome of some personal religious experience that simply happened to be accepted by others” (Davies, 2003: 118). The structure of the Church is seen as crucial from the beginning of Mormonism where: “Joseph Smith set about to develop a structure whose hierarchical relations would govern the corporate relationships that the new faith defined as essential ingredients in the plan of salvation” (Nuckolls, 2004: 316).

The relationship of Latter-day Saints to other people is formalized within an ecclesiology; Church members are given the opportunity to serve one another. Through these service opportunities Latter-day Saints believe that they are able to “work out [their] salvation” (Philippians 2:12):

And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by labouring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day (Jacob 1:19).¹⁵⁷

However, the interpersonal relationships are not the only function of the Church.

...belonging to a church means membership in an ecclesiastical body that claims to be more than merely a gathering of Christians. Rather, God is in contact with the Church as well as with the individual. In other words, the Church is a sacrament; it is a channel

¹⁵⁷ The fulfilment of a calling is not the only criteria for salvation; and the tension between a work and grace salvation will be explored further in chapter 4.

through which God extends grace and duty to human beings in ways not possible for individuals alone (Bowman, 2009: 24).

The service that is given by all members of the Church is a prelude to the service and unity that can be found within salvation (unity with the Godhead). The function of the Church as a preparation for salvation is a crucial purpose which has not been fully explored in Latter-day Saint theology.¹⁵⁸

Thus, a participation in the work of the Church is a necessary preparation for salvation. The unity with the Godhead and others in this life and in the next is the nature of salvation.¹⁵⁹ In a Latter-day Saint theology the Church functions as a place where an individual's relationship with the Godhead can be similarly worked out and centred. Davies extends his exploration of Latter-day Saint ecclesiology further in suggesting that "the Church framework within which they 'know' him [Christ] is of primary and not secondary importance. In theological terms, ecclesiology is foundational as the setting for christology" (Davies, 2003: 242-243).¹⁶⁰ However, perhaps Davies does not go far enough in stressing the importance of ecclesiology; since ecclesiology is also deeply related to the classical treatment of the Mormon understanding of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saint ecclesiology is similarly foundational as the setting to receive the Holy Ghost. The Church's most important function is as a channel for the blessings of the atonement of Christ and the reception of the Holy Ghost. This type of christological and pneumatological ecclesiology has not been developed within Latter-day Saint teaching previously (rather, previous studies tend to focus on the hierarchical structure and focus of the

¹⁵⁸ The importance of unity has been explored (see D&C 23: 7; D&C 35: 2; D&C 38: 27; D&C 41: 2; D&C 51: 9; D&C 105: 4; D&C 107: 27; D&C 128: 18; D&C 138: 17) but not as a type for the nature of salvation.

¹⁵⁹ See section 2.3a.

¹⁶⁰ It would have been possible for an ecclesiology to be located in either a discussion of christology or pneumatology. It is purely arbitrary that it receives its exploration in the chapter on pneumatology and no suggestion of primacy of importance is intended.

Church). It will be necessary at this point to explore fully the functioning of such an ecclesiology.

The Holy Ghost inspires the President of the Church with guidance for the world; it is within that structure that individual revelations of the Holy Ghost function within Latter-day Saint teaching:

But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this Church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the Church. And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the Church, thou mayest do it. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom; And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the Church; For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead (D&C 28: 2-7).

Orthodoxy assumes an important role within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To some degree orthodoxy can be established through the Temple Recommend questions,¹⁶¹ one of which refers to the hierarchical structure of the Church: “Do you sustain the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator and as the only person on the earth who possesses and is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007: 4). “Sustain”, in Latter-day Saint terminology, signifies that members “acknowledge before God that he [the Prophet] is the rightful possessor

¹⁶¹ To enter one of the Temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a person must be a member of the Church in good standing having answered a series of questions to obtain a Temple Recommend.

of all the priesthood keys; it also means that we covenant with God that we will abide by the direction and the counsel that come through His prophet. It is a solemn covenant” (Haight, 1994: 14). The orthodoxy is seen to be maintained through the Prophet:

The Lord surely understood the need to keep His doctrines pure and to trust its interpretation to only one source. Of course, we are all admonished to study and gain as much knowledge as we can possibly obtain in this life. We are encouraged to discuss and exchange ideas one with another to further our understanding. However, the Lord has only one source for the declaration of His basic fundamental doctrines (Perry, 1994: 19).

Thus, any teaching that is not in harmony with those promulgated by the Church is seen to be heretical and imperfect.¹⁶² The particularist knowledge of the person of Christ (explored in chapter 2) is extended to include all that is taught in the Church as true doctrine.

The President/Prophet of the Church is similarly believed to hold all the priesthood keys. Priesthood keys have been defined as the “right to direct the work of the priesthood” (Nelson, 2005: 40).¹⁶³ It is only through the exercise of these keys that Latter-day Saints believe the priesthood ordinances can be carried out. The ordinances of the Gospel are essential to salvation as evidence of faith and also channels for the atonement and the Holy Ghost.¹⁶⁴ The necessity of these ordinances within the boundaries of the Church is exemplified in a revelation given to Joseph Smith who enquired whether people who had previously been baptized required

¹⁶² Various writers including Bowman (2009) suggest that elements of dissent, which have been labelled as apostasy in recent Church history, actually serve a useful purpose in the Church and can be seen to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. This view would be rejected by most in mainstream Mormonism (see for example Packer, 1981).

¹⁶³ All of these keys (right of presidency and authority) are held by the President of the Church; but he delegates aspects of them to leaders throughout the world. For example the Bishop holds the keys for the ward, the Stake President the keys for the stake, and the Temple President the keys for the Temple.

¹⁶⁴ As explored in section 3.2c.

rebaptism: “although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this Church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old” (D&C 22:2-3).

Latter-day Saints, therefore, believe that only ordinances carried out within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are accepted by God. Ordinances as expressions of faith are only efficacious when that faith is centred on a true understanding of Christ and his work. But, more importantly, for Latter-day Saints, ordinances are necessary for the effects of the atonement and the Holy Ghost (sanctification, guidance, sealing) to be in force, as prerequisites for salvation.

The Church becomes the body of Christ “created, ordered, and sustained by the Charismatic inspirations of the Breath of the risen Jesus” (Gelpi, 1992: 187). The members of the body of Christ work in conjunction with Christ and the Holy Ghost to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:37). This is evidenced through the role of ordinances, the importance of teaching and believing orthodoxy, and of communal service. All of these actions within the Church are important but they are only given full life and efficacy when joined with the atonement of Christ and the influence of the Holy Ghost. The various functions of the Church reinforce both a christological and pneumatological exclusivism: the communal service nature of the Church serves as a preparation for the unity that is salvation; therefore, a participation in this service is crucial for salvation. The hierarchical nature of the Church establishes orthodoxy that is necessary for salvation; the ordinances that are a focus for

the reception of the blessings of the atonement through the Holy Ghost can only be conducted within the structure of the Church.¹⁶⁵

3.2e Interim Conclusion

The classical Mormon pneumatology explored thus far in the chapter builds on certain themes evident within a Latter-day Saint christology: the importance and developmental nature of knowledge; the importance of a relationship with the Godhead; the preeminent place of Latter-day Saint teaching. A stringent pneumatological exclusivism is ostensibly evident within Mormonism. The work of the Holy Ghost, necessary for salvation, is only available within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While there may be activity of the Holy Ghost prior to baptism into the Church, it serves a preparatory role in confirming the truth of Latter-day Saint doctrines and ordinances. Latter-day Saints believe that if these manifestations of the Holy Ghost are not acted upon then promptings will be lost. This exclusivism needs to be explored further to develop the resultant implications for the construction of a theology of religions.

In examining Latter-day Saint ecclesiology as a facet of a pneumatology, the exclusivism inherent in classical Latter-day Saint beliefs has been developed and enhanced. The structure of the Church as a vehicle for the actions of the Holy Ghost, including in that, the effects of the atonement felt through the Holy Ghost, leads to a very rigid ecclesiocentrism. Tiessen describes ecclesiocentrism as being identified by the characteristic that “only those who hear the Gospel can be saved” (2004: 32). This definition is not restrictive enough with regard to Latter-day Saints incorporating, as they do, the necessity of hearing the Gospel and receiving its ordinances within the structure of the Church. The Church is the means of providing orthodoxy and organizational revelation through the Holy Ghost: this orthodoxy is evidence of a reception

¹⁶⁵ The implications for the construction of a theology of religions of each of these beliefs about the Church will be returned to in section 3.4.

of the Holy Ghost and as such is necessary for salvation. The Church's second role is as the body of Christ in union with the Holy Ghost; all of its members are required to serve Christ and each other in unity as a requisite for salvation.¹⁶⁶ The Church's third role in a Latter-day Saint view is as a provider of the ordinances and covenants necessary for salvation (serving as channels of the atonement and the Holy Ghost). These three functions cannot be found outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as such there is no hope for the fulness of the Holy Ghost or salvation for those who are not members. The most extreme description, in Latter-day Saint writings, of any similar practice in other Churches trying to fulfil these functions comes from the early Apostle, Orson Pratt:¹⁶⁷

But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives baptism or the Lord's supper from their hands will highly offend God, for he looks upon them as the most corrupt people... And any person who shall be so wicked as to receive a holy ordinance of the Gospel from the ministers of any of these apostate churches will be sent down to hell with them, unless they repent of the unholy and impious act (Pratt, O. 1960 [1853]: 255).

¹⁶⁶ In so far as the Church provides opportunities to serve, it provides members with the opportunity to develop themselves and show their works as evidence of the reception of the grace of Christ, and the fulness of the Holy Ghost.

¹⁶⁷ His book *The Seer* is not authoritative; some aspects have been disavowed:

The Seer [and other writings by Pratt] contains doctrines which we cannot sanction, and which we have felt impressed to disown, so that the Saints who now live, and who may live hereafter, may not be misled by our silence, or be left to misinterpret it. Where these objectionable works, or parts of works, are bound in volumes, or otherwise, they should be cut out and destroyed (Clark, 1965-75, vol. 2: 239).

However vitriolic Pratt's writings may seem the general belief is similar to the one explored earlier in section 3.3a.

Thus a very particularist ecclesiology, grounded in christology and pneumatology, is evident in Latter-day Saint teaching. This would seem to have deeply exclusivist implications for a theology of religions.

3.3 Constructive Mormon pneumatology

Thus far in this chapter the work of the Holy Ghost, as evidenced in the gift of the Holy Ghost, has been explored. In light of pneumatologies in mainstream Christianity, this can be seen to be a narrow interpretation of the work of the Spirit. Traditional pneumatologies ascribe various roles to the Holy Ghost. To elucidate the role of the Spirit in the Old Testament the Spirit's work is linked with the Hebrew word *ruac'h*. This word has variously been translated as breath, wind or spirit (see Karkkainen, 2002; and Congar, 2006). In addition to the passages that refer to the Spirit of the Lord or of God (see for example Isaiah 11:2),¹⁶⁸ Congar suggests that the Spirit is also that which “animates the body” (Congar, 2006: 3). In Latter-day Saint teaching there is a corollary to mainstream Christianity, in that there are various applications of the term “spirit” outside of the work of the Holy Ghost: the spirit of humanity, and the Spirit (or light) of Christ, both of which are different.

The spirit that is part of humanity is not the Holy Ghost, but a creation of God the Father in the premortal existence. These spirits are sent to earth to inhabit the mortal bodies of humanity: “[God] took his spirit [the man's spirit], and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Abraham 3:7). This spirit is “a vital force divinely breathed into man and form[s] a distinct part of his being” (Kamlah, 1978: 692). Life cannot exist without this spirit and this spirit continues to live at death with the temporary separation of body. It is not, however, the Holy Ghost, and is not sustained by the Holy Ghost

¹⁶⁸ Karkkainen observes that “The Old Testament contains roughly one hundred instances” of these terms (Karkkainen, 2002: 26).

but is used in communication with the Holy Ghost. The spirit of humanity, therefore, needs no further exploration in the development of a Latter-day Saint pneumatology.

It was noted in the classical section that the Holy Ghost has a spirit body and as such is limited in time and space.¹⁶⁹ The roles of the Holy Ghost outlined earlier suggest a need to be in more than one place at a time. In order to fulfil his role to speak to people, he does so by acting through the light of Christ (see Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 40). The Spirit (or light) of Christ “is everywhere present... is impersonal and has no size, nor dimensions; it proceeds forth from the presence of the Father and the Son and is in all things” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 49-50). It is the light of Christ as an aspect of Latter-day Saint pneumatology that will form the basis for a constructive pneumatology.

3.3a The light of Christ

The light of Christ is variously known as the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of the Lord but is not to be confused, in Latter-day Saint teaching, with the Holy Ghost.¹⁷⁰ It has a specific role and function but is not a member of the Godhead, or indeed a personage of body or spirit.

¹⁶⁹ (see above 3.2a).

¹⁷⁰ The light of Christ “is also described as ‘the Spirit of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 84:45), ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Cor. 3:18; see also Mosiah 25:24), ‘the Spirit of truth’ (D&C 93:26), ‘the light of truth’ (D&C 88:6), ‘the Spirit of God’ (D&C 46:17), and ‘the Holy Spirit’ (D&C 45:57). Some of these terms are also used to refer to the Holy Ghost” (Packer, 2005: 8) and care should be taken to avoid confusion. In Latter-day Saint thought, “[t]he influence or spirit that emanates from Jesus Christ, which is called the light of Christ, is holy, but is neither the Holy [Ghost] nor a personage” (Wilson, 1992: 651), but the two are sometimes confused:

The Holy Ghost, as we are taught in our modern revelation, is the third member in the Godhead and a personage of Spirit. These terms are used synonymously: Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of Truth, Holy Spirit, Comforter; all having reference to the Holy Ghost. The same terms largely are used in relation to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, also called the Light of Truth, light of Christ, Spirit of God, and Spirit of the Lord; and yet they are separate and distinct things. We have a great deal of confusion because we have not kept that clearly in our minds (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956] [1954-1956], vol 1: 50).

There is a spirit—the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, the light of truth, the light of Christ—that defies description and is beyond mortal comprehension. It is in us and in all things; it is around us and around all things; it fills the earth and the heavens and the universe. It is everywhere, in all immensity, without exception; it is an indwelling, immanent, ever-present, never-absent spirit. It has neither shape nor form nor personality. It is not an entity nor a person nor a personage. It has no agency, does not act independently, and exists not to act but to be acted upon (McConkie, B. 1985: 257).

There are two specific roles which the light of Christ has: that of being a force within creation and that of being a guide.

3.3a (i) Power of Creation and Life- Giver

Latter-day Saints teach that the light of Christ “proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space”. Further, it is “the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God” (D&C 88:12-13). Therefore, the light of Christ has “creative, governing, life-giving, and ‘intelligence-inspiring power’” (Dunford, 1992: 835). The power of the light of Christ is manifested in the light of the sun, moon, and stars and is the power by which they and the earth were made.¹⁷¹

Thus, when the Mosaic account of the creation says that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2), and when Abraham records of those same events that “the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters” (Abraham 4:2), the revealed word is speaking of the light of Christ. And when Job says that “by his

¹⁷¹ It is important to note that in Latter-day Saint thought, the creation was accomplished through the authority and power of the Melchizedek Priesthood (see McConkie, B. 1985: 310). This does not contradict the use of the light of Christ as a life giving force which was harnessed by that same priesthood.

spirit [the Lord] hath garnished the heavens” (Job 26:13), and the Psalmist explains that all things were created because the Lord sent forth his spirit, by which also he “renews the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30), both are teaching the same truth. Creation itself came by the light of Christ (McConkie, B. 1985: 258).¹⁷²

For Latter-day Saints, while the Son created the earth under the direction of the Father, the tool he used to accomplish the giving of life to everything was the light of Christ, and hence the light of Christ continues to be the ontological cause and sustaining force within everything: “God is a personal being of body— a body limited in extent. He cannot, therefore, at a given moment be personally everywhere... By his power, will and word, [he] is everywhere present... The holy spirit [meaning the light of Christ] permeates all the things of the universe, material and spiritual” (Widtsoe, 1915: 68-69).¹⁷³

The initial presence of the light of Christ in creation opens up areas for development within a discussion of revelation outside the boundaries of the Church as mainstream theology indicates. In exploring the Holy Spirit’s role in creation, Brunner argues that one does not need explicit revelation of Christ to recognize his grace in creation: “The world is the creation of God. In every creation the spirit of the creator is in some way recognisable... Therefore the creation of the world is at the same time a revelation, a self-communication of God” (Barth & Brunner,

¹⁷² Pinnock is an example in more mainstream pneumatologies of ascribing this role in creation to the Holy Spirit:

...the Holy Spirit, who brooded over the primeval waters and turned chaos into cosmos (Gen 1:2). The deep ocean stirred, and diverse creatures began to emerge... Spirit is truly the life-giver, as Jesus said: “It is the spirit that gives life” (John 6:63). The breath blows on everything, bringing life from death, beauty from ugliness and peace from confusion. The Spirit infuses the world with love and flies on the air (Job 12:10; 33:4). “The Spirit brooded over the still earth as a bird broods over its nest, warming the dormant life within, wakening it, releasing it, so that the tiny creatures can come to birth”. We encounter Spirit in the life of creation itself, in the vitality, the joy, the radiance, the music, the honey, the flowers, the embrace (1996: 50).

¹⁷³ Again, a role in traditional pneumatologies associated with the Holy Spirit: “the Holy Spirit is the loving, self-communicating, out-fanning and out-pouring presence of the eternal divine life of... God” (Moltmann, 2001: 289)

2002 [1934]: 24-25). This revelation in creation needs fully exploring in the context of Latter-day Saint belief.¹⁷⁴ There is the possibility that revelation through the light of Christ could teach people of Christ and his work:

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psalm 19: 1-4; see also Rom 1: 19-20).

However, this understanding of revelation in creation could possibly serve a negative purpose—leaving humanity “without excuse” for not knowing God (Rom 1: 19-20). The light of Christ, in this context, is used to condemn humanity rather than extend the possibility of salvation.¹⁷⁵ The reconciliation of these teachings with classical Mormon pneumatology will be explored further

¹⁷⁴ “God is active by his Spirit in the structures of creation, in the whole of history, even in the sphere of the religions. The breath of God is free to blow wherever it wills (John 3: 8). The economy of the Spirit is not under our control, and certainly is not limited to the church” (Pinnock, 1992: 78).

¹⁷⁵ Demarest has discussed similar passages of scripture and concluded that there are six points of note concerning general revelation.

1. All people know God and his nature.
2. Knowledge of God is the first supreme truth a priori.
3. God can be known through a posteriori reflection on the world.
4. Humans repress this knowledge and turn towards idolatry not knowing God as redeemer.
5. This rebellion results in God allowing sin and its consequences to take their course.
6. This rebellion establishes a person’s guilt (see Demarest (1982) and Strange (2002: 112-3)).

In this view of general revelation, there is enough knowledge of God to condemn people justly, but not enough to save people.

in the context of the second role of the light of Christ.¹⁷⁶ Following on from this, the resultant implications for a theology of religions will be developed.¹⁷⁷

3.3a (ii) Poured out upon all flesh

As identified in the preceding section, the continuing role of the light of Christ in creation suggests that there may be knowledge of God available to all people. The classical pneumatology section of this chapter examined the role of the Holy Ghost in revelation; it was noted that the Holy Ghost only came to those outside of the Church as a precursor to accepting the truths taught therein. Consequently, the parts of the Holy Ghost's roles that made efficacious the atonement of Christ were limited to members of the Church. However, in this section the Latter-day Saint teaching about the light of Christ and its revelatory role may support the possibility of general revelation.

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God (Moro. 7:16; see also D&C 84:45-47).

These scriptures highlight that the light of Christ is given to humanity with the express purpose of persuading people to believe in Christ. In contrast to the Holy Ghost who does not dwell with the unworthy (see 1 Cor 3: 16-17), the light of Christ is “the instrumentality and agency by which Deity keeps in touch and communes with all his children, both the righteous and the wicked” (McConkie, B. 1985: 259). The light of Christ is the enticing power through which God

¹⁷⁶ See section 3.2b (ii).

¹⁷⁷ See section 3.4.

encourages individuals “to forsake the world and come unto Christ” by the placing of “good desires and feelings... in the hearts of decent people”. The light of Christ is not limited to the sphere of religion:

It is the medium of intelligence that guides inventors, scientists, artists, composers, poets, authors, statesmen, philosophers, generals, leaders, and influential men in general, when they set their hands to do that which is for the benefit and blessing of their fellowmen. By it the Lord guides in the affairs of men and directs the courses of nations and kingdoms. By it the Lord gives ennobling art, the discoveries of science, and music like that sung in the courts above. By it he dispenses truth in a host of ways to all who will heed the promptings. It is the Spirit, promised of old, that is being poured out “upon all flesh” in the last days, thus preparing them for the receipt of the Holy Ghost and that high state of spirituality of which Joel, speaking in the name of the Lord, said: “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29) (McConkie, B. 1985: 259).

This understanding of the light of Christ has major implications for a theology of religions. It raises the possibility that God is active, through the light of Christ, in the religions of the world. There arises the possibility that revelation, however incomplete, is active in the life of individuals, and possibly the structures of religion.¹⁷⁸ The functioning of revelation among all people exponentially extends the smaller discussion of the light of Christ’s role in creation to impact on an individual’s salvation. If God is revealing himself to individuals through the light of Christ then there may be opportunity for that light of Christ to affect a person’s ultimate destiny.

¹⁷⁸ The possibility of “revelation” in other religions is explored in detail later in this section.

Latter-day Saints do not believe that the reception of the light of Christ is the same as the Holy Ghost being received by all of humanity; it is seen as the conscience, or the internal moral compass that is within everybody: “there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32: 8). The light of Christ is a prelude to the reception of the Holy Ghost: “There are three phases of the light of Christ... The first one is the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; the second phase is the gift of the Holy Ghost; and the third is the more sure word of prophecy” (Romney, 1977: 43). The light of Christ, if it is followed, leads people “to a knowledge of the truth and the possession of the greater light and testimony of the Holy Ghost” (Smith, J. F. 1939: 68). The *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches this: “For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith” (D&C 98:12; see also 2 Ne. 28:30). This scripture can be interpreted to be limited to faithful Latter-day Saints; however, the extension of the “faithful” to include recipients of the light of Christ is both hopeful and valid within the current context. Elsewhere in the *Doctrine and Covenants* a similar teaching is given, with perhaps a more direct allusion to the light of Christ: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). Thus, those who are faithful to the degree of the light of Christ they receive will progress to further light.¹⁷⁹ This is reminiscent of the continuum alluded to earlier,¹⁸⁰ in the sense that all are progressing in light and knowledge.

The revelatory role of the light of Christ is reminiscent of Rahner, writing from a Roman Catholic perspective, who argues that “God... has already communicated himself in his Holy Spirit always and everywhere and to every person as the innermost centre of his existence”

¹⁷⁹ Conversely, those who are not faithful to this light “from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Ne. 28: 30).

¹⁸⁰ See section 2.2a.

(1978: 139). This reception of the Spirit or the light of Christ is crucial to people being in a position to receive the complete truth of Jesus Christ: “Transcendental experience of the Spirit is oriented toward explicit awareness” (Karkkainen, 2002: 116). Pinnock echoes this: “What one encounters in Jesus is the fulfilment of previous invitations of the Spirit” (Pinnock, 1996: 63). However, both Pinnock and Rahner extend this preparatory role of general revelation to suggest the reception of grace and ultimately salvific efficacy.¹⁸¹ To understand fully the impact that the salvific efficacy of revelation outside the special revelation of Christ might have on the construction of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions it is necessary, at this point, to explore how Rahner (and, to a degree, Pinnock) reach their conclusions. It may be that similar logic can also be used within the scope of Latter-day Saint teaching.

Rahner’s thesis is based upon a central tenet of his theological anthropology, the “supernatural existential” (Rahner, 1994). For Rahner, the offer of Christ’s grace is available to all people throughout the world. Ruokanen comments on the nature of the supernatural existential:

From the ontological point of view, God is the “innermost substance” (*entelekheia*) of the world. Because of the essential presence of God in being, the human world has become habitually saturated with the grace of God. Consequently, ontologically every man exists under the influence of supernatural grace (Ruokanen, 1992: 32).

¹⁸¹ In defining general revelation, Strange notes that in Evangelical orthodoxy it is “the witness of God in creation, providence and the *imago Dei*” (Strange, 2002: 111). Netland argues that general revelation gives humankind the ability to “understand that God exists, that he is the eternal Creator” and that we can know ethical standards (Netland, 2001: 317). The impact that general revelation may have on salvation is not limited to an either/ or debate; for example Pannenberg “insists that faith in Christ is possible *only* if it is the response to and fulfilment of a person’s previous knowledge of God in general revelation. To encounter the God of Jesus Christ is not to meet a stranger” (Knitter, 1985: 99-100). General revelation, therefore, serves a preparatory purpose that is only fulfilled in the ‘special revelation of Jesus Christ’ (D’Costa, 1986: 59).

This leads to God's self-declaration, wherever it is to be found, as a manifestation of grace.

Demarest suggests that even the "unbeliever is constantly being shaped by the supernatural grace that inexorably is being offered to it" (1982: 190). Rahner suggests something slightly different when he writes that when people seek within themselves they find grace:

When a person in theoretical or practical knowledge or in subjective activity confronts the abyss of his existence... and when this person has the courage to look into himself and to find in these depths his ultimate truth, there he can also have the experience that this abyss accepts him as his true and forgiving security (1978: 132).

For Rahner, whatever causes a person to look for answers beyond themselves is a part of God's self-communication, and an expression of grace that is not restricted to one area or one community. For Pinnock "where there is Spirit, there is grace, for the Spirit embodies grace" and this grace "is God's providential presence in all humanity that has the potential to lead to salvation" (Strange, 2002: 99). As Pinnock puts it:

His point is that Jews and Gentiles alike possess the light of divine revelation and are responsible for knowing it, because God will judge them on the basis of it. It is not a negative thing to say that everyone in the whole world has access to God's truth, whether they know about Jesus or not... he [Paul] is insisting that humanity cannot save itself apart from the work of God in redemption (1992: 33).

D'Costa relates this belief of Rahner thus:

Hence, there is a pre-reflective, pre-apprehension of God inbuilt into our very nature- which Rahner calls "transcendental revelation". Consequently, he maintains that every time we reach beyond ourselves- for instance in acts of selfless love, in the experience of deep beauty, by following what is true and good whatever the cost, or in acts of trust and

hope- we are experiencing and responding to grace mediated through the categorical, whether or not this is recognized. In this respect, if a person totally gives of themselves in trust and love to another, they are only able to do this by grace (1986: 81-82).

Rahner uses his “supernatural existential” to extend the boundaries of the Church, enabling people outside of the boundaries of the visible Church to be in receipt of grace and have the possibility of salvation. This is an interesting parallel for Latter-day Saints who in a similar way teach that there is no salvation outside of the Church, but also teach that there is a work of the Holy Ghost outside the Church (in terms of the preparatory truth and the light of Christ). In a similar way to Rahner, it may be possible to posit an extension of the boundaries of the salvific relationship beyond the membership of the Church. The consequence of Rahner’s “supernatural existential” is to include those people who respond to the grace that they receive. If within Mormonism it is possible to receive levels of grace and the Spirit through prevenient revelation, then the potential of salvation on the basis of the grace they have received and acted upon becomes a possibility. However, the necessity of ordinances suggests that this possibility will be somewhat limited in scope.

Any response to God, or act of service, is based on a conscious or unconscious acceptance and expression of the grace of God made known through the incarnate Word. Latter-day Saints believe that the ability to go beyond oneself is an expression of the supernatural existential, and evidence that grace is evident in a person’s life. This is a crucial issue in any theology of religions. Can bad people do good things? If they can, can they be expressions of a relationship with God? An inclusivist would point to Matthew 25 (see for example Tiessen, 2004: 148):

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was

hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me”. Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt 25: 33-40).

In this passage it would seem that to know Jesus a person does not declare his name but does his bidding. Thus is it possible for a non-Christian to be more Christlike than a Christian? Can a non-Christian reflect more of Christ’s grace in their life than a Christian? Knitter suggests that the supernatural existential has parallels with general revelation (1985: 125). Strange disagrees because for him “general revelation is not salvific revelation” (2002: 104). However, for Rahner the supernatural existential extends the influence of the Holy Ghost and evidences people as “anonymous Christians” (1969: 394), thus extending the scope of salvation.

In light of this, the extent to which an impact on salvation by the light of Christ may be replicated in Latter-day Saint belief demands further exploration.¹⁸² As noted by McConkie (1985), the light of Christ for Latter-day Saints is the spirit that prompts and ennobles all of humanity and human effort. Latter-day Saints believe that the light of Christ prompts people of all religions to rise above the various situations they encounter in their lives. In this sense the concept of prevenient grace within mainstream Christianity could be similar to the prevenient spirit within Mormonism. Whether this spirit is related to grace in any way has not been

¹⁸² see section 3.4.

explored fully at this point and needs developing. This prevenient spirit is exemplified in Latter-day Saint teaching about figures from the Reformation, who are believed to have been guided by the light of Christ:

Luther had it when he was inspired to war against the iniquities that existed in the Romish Church. He was raised up especially to prepare the way for the manifestation of the work of God in the last days. Calvin and Melancthon had a portion of the Holy [Ghost], and so had all the Reformers who followed them; and though they had not the authority to build up the Church of God in its ancient purity, they still had a work to do, and they have come in their days and generations and have laboured zealously, indefatigably and fearlessly, regardless of death, inspired of God to do the work which they performed in the various lands in which they laboured—Germany, France, England, Scotland and various parts of Europe and also in our land—America. John Wesley, also, was raised up and inspired of God to do a work, and he did it.... We believe it was a preparatory work for the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Cannon, 1872: 55-56).

These men are not seen as devil-inspired, but as guided by the light of Christ. Furthermore, this extends beyond other Christian traditions. In the “Easter Message” of February 15, 1978, the First Presidency wrote that Muhammad and other non-biblical religious leaders and philosophers “received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations” (1978: 1). Pratt once suggested that Muhammad was on “the side of truth” and “my rational faculties would compel me to admit that the Mahometan (sic) history and Mahometan (sic) doctrine was a standard raised against the most corrupt and abominable idolatry that ever perverted our earth” (Pratt, P. 1856: 38, 40).¹⁸³ This has echoes of the work of Temple when

¹⁸³ Parley P. Pratt was an apostle.

discussing John 1:9:¹⁸⁴ “All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought, or conduct, or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them. By the Word of God— that is to say by Jesus Christ — Isaiah, and Socrates, Plato, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira and Confucius conceived and uttered such truths as they declared. There is only one divine light; and every man in his measure is enlightened by it” (Temple, 1952: 10). It is, therefore, evident that God is at work among the religions of the world.¹⁸⁵

This is not to say that these religious leaders and religions are prophets or completely inspired; indeed, Pratt continued his commentary on Islam: “It might not have been a very pure standard, for the fulness of the Gospel, with its Priesthood, ordinances, powers, and gifts were not there, because that pertained to another branch of Abraham's family” (Pratt, P. 1856: 40). How a middle ground can be found between outright rejection and the acceptance of a plurality of truths for Latter-day Saints, is perhaps modelled in mainstream Christianity's outworking of such beliefs. Rahner suggests that non-Christian religions may have “individual moments” which make adherents “anonymous Christians”. These moments, however, are mixed with error and remain partial revelation. (Rahner, 1983: 203). However, these individual moments are crucial to a development of a pneumatological inclusivism,¹⁸⁶ but is this spirit enough to save and serve as a channel of God's grace and make adherents anonymous Christians?

For Rahner this is certainly the case:

¹⁸⁴ “...[T]he true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”.

¹⁸⁵ The implications of this for a Latter-day Saint theology of religions are hopeful and demand further exploration in section 3.4.

¹⁸⁶ For the concept of a continuum it is possible to use these individual moments to move towards a fulfilment theology. Rahner suggests that “world is drawn to its spiritual fulfillment by the Spirit of God, who directs the whole history of the world in all its length and breadth towards its proper goal” (1983:203).

Wherever persons surrender themselves to God or the ultimate reality, under whatever name, and dedicate themselves to the cause of justice, peace, fraternity, and solidity with other people they have implicitly accepted Christ and, to some degree, entered into this Christic existence. Just as it was through the Spirit that Christ established this new sphere of existence, in the same way, anyone who enters into this Christic existence of love and freedom is acting under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ (1976: 291).

Similarly Moltmann, within mainstream Christianity, suggests that the Spirit is evident when it motivates to action, when “people truly affirm and love life, [taking] up the struggle against violence and injustice” (2001: xii). Grace becomes evident in the life of the anonymous Christian as the evidence of their faith by undertaking and living “the quiet sincerity of patience, in devotion to his material duties” (Rahner, 1969: 394). The efficacious grace of Christ is evident through a person’s actions.

While Latter-day Saints would accept that grace is evident through actions; “[Christ] extends to us his grace, a power that enables us to do things we could not do on our own. Our righteousness is then born of the Spirit, our works are his works” (Millet, 2003: 137). It is not evident that Latter-day Saints would accept grace becoming salvific without explicit belief in Christ. Linked with the teaching that the light of Christ leads to proper belief in Christ it is possible to see that Latter-day Saints would not accept a salvific role of the light of Christ (no matter what actions it motivates). It is only when the light of Christ is fulfilled in the gift of the Holy Ghost that salvation can be given. If people accept the truths that the light of Christ teaches it will lead to further truth: “If a man who has never heard the Gospel will hearken to the teachings and manifestations of the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Truth, which come to him, often spoken of as conscience—every man has a conscience and knows more or less when he does wrong, and the Spirit guides him if he will hearken to its whisperings—it will lead him eventually to the fulness of the Gospel” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 51; see

also McConkie, B. 1985: 260). If, however, they are not accepted or acted upon then that light recedes: “All men receive this Spirit, but not all hearken to its voice. Many choose to walk in carnal paths and go contrary to the enticings of the Spirit. It is possible to sear one's conscience to the point that the Spirit will withdraw its influence and men will no longer know or care about anything that is decent and edifying” (McConkie, B. 1985: 260). Indeed, by rejecting further enticements of the light of Christ, Latter-day Saints would argue that, people are in fact hearkening to the spirit of the devil: “Little by little, we are bound by Satan; little by little, we become his slaves—the victims of corruption. Our desires for the higher things of life become dulled, and our judgment of what is right, and what is wrong, warped. The Spirit of Christ is crowded from our hearts” (Reynolds and Sjohdal, 1955-1961, vol 7: 339).

However, and crucially, from an examination of christology and from the classical section on pneumatology, it is evident in Latter-day Saint belief that a person's progression through knowledge can be seen to be a continuum. The light of Christ would be reflective of just such a belief. There are various truths that are taught which help a person progress along their search for knowledge but are not complete truths in themselves. Thus, if this were applied simplistically to Islam, the prophet Muhammad taught of the importance of the worship of one God, which is a step further along the continuum than the prior polytheistic worship evident in Arabia. However, in itself the Muslim belief in one God is not complete; it does not contain the associated belief in the Divine Sonship of Christ. Therefore, people who respond to the light of Christ, whether in creation or through inspiration, are “embryonic Mormons” rather than “anonymous” ones. People outside of the Church cannot become followers of Christ until they have accepted him through his atonement. Creation does not serve a salvific purpose. Rather, creation serves a leading and enticing role as the spirit is active in it. Only Christ can provide

that grace and in Latter-day Saint thought; creation is not the tool God uses.¹⁸⁷ The mediator of the grace of Christ is, in Latter-day Saint teaching, the Holy Ghost. While the light of Christ provides prevenient revelation, and “ennobles” humanity, it’s greatest importance is as a prelude to the full reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, which enables salvation to be realistically hoped for.

3.3b Conclusion

In constructive Mormon pneumatology the light of Christ offers a slight softening of the particularism explored thus far. Through the light of Christ, Latter-day Saints believe that, knowledge of God is available to all of humanity and is a means of inspiration to all. Elements of this belief are analogous to Rahner’s supernatural existential; “a term he uses as shorthand that all persons are created into a relationship with God” (Partridge, 2000: 206). Rahner explains this further as he discusses a person’s innate desire for God:

God wishes to communicate himself, to pour forth the love which he himself is. That is the first and the last of his real plans and hence of his real world too. Everything else exists so that this one thing might be: the eternal miracle of infinite Love. And so God makes a creature whom he can love: he creates man. He creates him in such a way that he can receive this Love which is God himself, and that he can and must at the same time accept it for what it is: the ever astounding wonder, the unexpected, unexacted gift (Rahner, 1961: 310-311).

Rahner recognizes that religions of the world are reflections of this innate desire to draw close to the transcendent. Humans have done their best without the explicit revelation of Christ to draw close in their relationship to deity. Latter-day Saints would agree but would still see these

¹⁸⁷ The tool he uses is the Church (and its resultant covenants, ordinances and revelations) which has been explored in 3.3a.

religious beliefs and the systems which incorporate them as insufficient to save, and as mere stepping stones to their fulfilment in the acceptance of the truths found in Mormonism. When combined with the other elements of pneumatology and the christological exclusivism,¹⁸⁸ the beliefs about the light of Christ are not sufficient to overcome the particularism of Latter-day Saint teaching. There are the beginnings of a move towards a pneumatological inclusivism in allowing that certain religious leaders have been inspired, but these “revelations” are only useful if they lead to an acceptance of Christ and the Holy Ghost within the structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The light of Christ in Latter-day Saint thought has the role of enticing and leading people to do good and of encouraging people to act on the light they have received. Without its consummation in the reception of the Holy Ghost, it cannot be a means of salvation: “By following the light of Christ, men are led to the Gospel covenant, to the baptismal covenant, to the Church and kingdom. There they receive the Holy Ghost” (McConkie, B. 1985: 260). How people react to the light of Christ is therefore of crucial importance. The light they receive will motivate them to specific actions, but examining the history of the world and the religious situation of society today, it is necessary to argue that this light of Christ may not have led all of the world’s inhabitants to the point where they can receive the fulness of the Gospel in this life. It would seem as though God has given sufficient revelation to condemn someone “without excuse” (Rom. 1: 19-20), but not enough to save them. If this is the case, then the question remains of the unevangelized: if a person dies before the opportunity to fulfil their belief has been offered then can they be justly condemned?¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Explored in chapter 2.

¹⁸⁹ This will be explored further in chapter 4 on eschatology, but the implications of the particularist pneumatological beliefs in Latter-day Saint teaching will be developed in the following section.

It is important to note that the light of Christ provides far more than a condemnatory role. In Latter-day Saint the inspiration and code of morality that the light of Christ provides for individuals is crucial in the development of individuals. The necessity of further “light” for salvation does not diminish the great role it performs for humanity. Without the light of Christ, there would be no position from which to build a true knowledge of Christ, and a reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost. The light of Christ is active in the world and, in Latter-day Saint teaching, is seen to inspire religious leaders. The hopeful implications of the light of Christ, sent forth from the Godhead, active in the religions of the world are crucial in the development of a theology of religions.

3.4 Implications of a Mormon pneumatology for a theology of religions

An examination of both the classical and constructive pneumatology within Latter-day Saint teaching has reinforced the exclusivist (with reservations) christological beliefs. The overwhelming majority of pneumatological beliefs point toward an exclusivism but with areas of development (particularly the belief in the prevenient role of the Holy Ghost and light of Christ) that could point to a more hopeful interpretation of other religions and their beliefs. The pneumatological and christological ecclesiology points to the Church being “the only true Church” (D&C 1:30) and the only organization where the ordinances, truths and relationships necessary for salvation can be found. All other religions are considered false. The *Book of Mormon* describes there being “two churches only; the one is the Church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the Church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the Church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great Church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth” (1 Ne. 14:10-11). McConkie has explained how the world can be seen to be split into the two churches:

The titles *Church of the devil* and *great and abominable Church* are used to identify all churches or organizations of whatever name or nature--whether political, philosophical, educational, economic, social, fraternal, civic, or religious-- which are designed to take men on a course that leads away from God and his laws and thus from salvation in the kingdom of God (McConkie, B. 1979: 137-138).

The negative implications for a theology of religions are evident; all other beliefs and religions are seen to block a person's salvation. Latter-day Saints believe the effects of the atonement, the Holy Ghost and possibility of salvation are not available outside the Church. Thus, the missiological imperative becomes a necessity,¹⁹⁰ as people must receive the Gospel to have any chance of a relationship with God and ultimate salvation.

In the development of knowledge and teachings, a Latter-day Saint pneumatology is clear that religions outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may have some truth but do not contain the fulness of truth, whose acceptance is a prerequisite for salvation. These truths can only come through the institutional revelation of the Church, and through the personal revelation from the Holy Ghost. In this way, a person develops the unity with the community of the Church and also with the Godhead, which again is a necessary prelude to salvation.¹⁹¹ The elements of truth evident in other religions are only important as imperfect preparations for their fulfilment in an acceptance of the Gospel. This is evidenced in a variety of writings about converts to the Church's experiences in joining the Church:

As she [a convert to the Church from Buddhism] read the Book of Mormon she realized that Jesus completed Buddha's teachings. Through Buddha she had learned there would be life after death. Now she knew it was Jesus who made that life possible. Through

¹⁹⁰ The missiological imperative was explored briefly in section 2.4.

¹⁹¹ The nature of salvation as unity with the Godhead is explored in section 2.2a (iv).

Buddha she has learned her actions had consequences, but now she knew it was Jesus who could alter the negative outcomes that follow negative choices. Jesus could provide a positive future despite a negative past (Wilcox, 2009: 87; see also Rector & Rector, 1971 for further examples).¹⁹²

The negative implications for the salvation of an adherent to these beliefs are straightforward; the beliefs are of no use or efficacy outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, there are positive implications for a theology of religions that need exploring in greater depth. If these religious beliefs are inspired of God (through the light of Christ), if this inspiration is evidence of divine benevolence, then the suggestion might be that response to these beliefs should have some attendant blessing or reward. The suggestion that God can be the author of “imperfect” revelations can be seen through the writings of various Latter-day Saint writers. Whitney suggested that “if some of God’s children are not worthy of the fulness of truth and would not make a wise use of it were it sent to them that is no reason why they should not be given as much truth as they can wisely use” (Whitney, 1917:28).¹⁹³ Whitney then used Muhammad’s revelation to the Arab nations as evidence of such an event. How this drew people closer to God is explained by Cannon:

I believe myself that Mahomet (sic) whom the Christians deride and call a false prophet and stigmatize with a great many epithets was a man raised up by the almighty and inspired to a certain extent by him to effect the reforms which he did in his land and in

¹⁹² This is in stark contrast to the writings of exclusivists, such as Kraemar, who do not see conversion as a fulfilment of previously held beliefs: “surrendering to Jesus Christ means in effect making a break with one’s own past, religiously speaking, however impressive that past may be and often is; and the Christian Church is in duty bound to require this break, because one must *openly* confess Him” (Kraemar, 1999: 260). To support his view Kraemer uses some limited documentary evidence from Christian converts who describe their experiences as “not the ‘passing over’ from one religion to another— that is seldom an event charged with much spiritual reality— but a spiritual pilgrimage ending in a complete transformation” (1999: 261).

¹⁹³ Orson F. Whitney was an early Apostle.

the nations surrounding he attacked idolatry and restored the great and crowning idea that there is but one god he taught that idea to his people and reclaimed them from polytheism and from the heathenish practices into which they had fallen (1957, vol 1: 308-10).

If God has sent these revelations, then, in constructing a theology of religions, the question has to be posed about which revelation has to be responded to in order to be saved. Is it the promptings evident in the gift of the Holy Ghost? Is it the guidance of the prophets as they are prompted by the Holy Ghost (therefore in both cases only members of the Church can be saved)? Or, is a response to the promptings of the light of Christ sufficient to save or activate the grace of Christ (as evidence of a response to Christ)? In inclusivist theologies of religion this aspect of the work of the Spirit is used to extend the work of atonement through a pneumatological inclusivism. In these writings religions of the world are human responses to the divine,¹⁹⁴ to the grace that is evident throughout the world. The inclusivism of such teachings is possible because of the universal salvific will of God. Rahner argues that these religions, up until the point the individual receives the knowledge of Christ and his Church, are therefore “lawful”, meaning “an institutional religion whose ‘use’ by man at a certain period can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God’s plan of salvation” (Rahner, 1999: 296). Latter-day Saints while not using the term “lawful”, may have the basis for such a view.

Revelations, which people have received, serve a preparatory role and are a means of prevenient revelation and perhaps grace. For Rahner, lawful religion becomes a means of salvation (only through the grace of God). If a person is faithful and sincere in their relationship to the transcendent as it is found in their lawful religion, then they are saved because of the

¹⁹⁴ In a Latter-day Saint view religions may actually be more than that; as evidenced in the previous discussion about Islam and the writings of Cannon and Whitney.

sacrifice and grace of Christ. This is a point with which Pinnock would agree: “that people are able to benefit from Christ’s work without knowing or confessing his name but by responding to the light shining in the darkness and which the darkness did not put out (John 1: 5).

[Inclusivism] confirms Paul’s statement, that God has never left himself without witness even in ancient times (Acts 14: 17)...” (1992: 23). It may be overstepping the boundary of Latter-day Saint orthodoxy to suggest that a similar claim could be made within Mormonism. Salvation comes through a true knowledge, acceptance of, and a relationship with, the Godhead only available within the Church. Prevenient revelation, while existing outside of the Church, cannot be seen to be salvific only in a preparatory way. This revelation is, however, evidence for Latter-day Saints of a benevolent God who seeks to prepare a way for all to receive salvation.

This point seems to be reminiscent of Pinnock who unpacks such beliefs in a Protestant sense: “The idea that world religions ordinarily function as paths of salvation is dangerous nonsense and wishful thinking” (Pinnock, 1992: 90). He is drawn to the conclusion that while God may be drawing people towards himself through the structures of religion, he cannot quite reach the same point as Rahner that the religions themselves are a means of salvation. Even though he is at pains to reject the possibility, Pinnock’s views are in reality very close to Rahner’s:

Here Pinnock’s position really parts company with evangelical inclusivism. Pinnock describes religions as responses to general revelation that are being drawn by the universal spirit of God toward himself. This is as close to calling religions “vehicles of salvation” as Pinnock will get and it is very close indeed (Sinkinson, 2000: 179).

Partridge seems to point toward a similar conclusion when commenting on Rahner:

My disagreement with this is simply that, although some religious structures and world-views, because of their religious content, can be mediators of grace, the extent to which they are is very limited—indeed, on the whole, they are an impediment (1998: 362).

This discussion on the “lawfulness” of other religions is replicated in Latter-day Saint teaching. Latter-day Saints may teach that other religions can be used as helpful mechanisms in gaining a right relationship with God, but they cannot function with any degree of salvific efficacy. These religions are, at the same time, helpful mechanisms and impediments to the receipt of salvation. There is an evident dichotomy in the strident ecclesiology which condemns all outside the Church, and the softer pneumatology of the light of Christ which suggests a bestowal of truth from God on other religions. Paralleling Sinkinson’s reading of Pinnock, it could be suggested that Latter-day Saints suggest that religions are vehicles used to *prepare* people for salvation.

For Latter-day Saints the difference between a vehicle providing salvation and evidence of the salvific will of God is immense. However preparatory prevenient revelation in other religions may be, exclusivism remains within Latter-day Saint teaching. Only when truths are combined with the atonement and the inspiration and sanctification process effected by the Holy Ghost (not the light of Christ) can any degree of salvific efficacy be claimed. While there may be revelational truth in their pneumatological works, the degree to which the light of Christ affects a person’s judgement by God is an area that does demand further exploration,¹⁹⁵ and must be examined to fully construct a theology of religions.

¹⁹⁵ This will be returned to in sections 4.2c and 4.3c.

Chapter 4: Eschatology

4.1. Introduction

Thus far in this work, the salvific will of God combined with the uniqueness of Christ inherent in a Mormon theology of religions has been explored with regard to the person and work of Christ, and also the person and work of the Holy Ghost. Within Latter-day Saint theology the tension between the dual foci of particularity and universality remain equally sharp following these two chapters. God's universal salvific desire is evident in the scope of the atonement of Christ, as well as the way in which the light of Christ can be found evident throughout nature, and indeed in the religions of the world. However, the particularism evident in the uniqueness of Christ is similarly evident in the need to confess Christ as Saviour in a Latter-day Saint context, and the imperative to follow him. Particularity is similarly reflected in the restricted work of the gift of the Holy Ghost and the activity of the Holy Ghost through the ordinances and structure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is against this background that this work moves forward to examine Latter-day Saint eschatology. What is the destiny of humanity as it passes from this life? Is that destiny different for those who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Joseph Smith once taught: "Will everybody be damned, but Mormons? Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent, and work righteousness" (1980 [1902], vol 3: 28). This suggests that only those who are baptized "Mormon" have an opportunity to receive salvation. What implications does this then have for those not of the Mormon religion? This chapter will also strive to address the questions raised within the previous two chapters: If the work of Christ reflects a universal salvific desire, how is this reflected in light of Latter-day Saint eschatology? Similarly, how can the seeming tension of a universal, yet limited, work of the Holy Ghost be

understood in relation to eschatology? It is the argument of this thesis that eschatology will aid in the exploration of tensions raised in christology and pneumatology. This chapter will begin by exploring the classical view of life after death within Mormonism; based on Latter-day Saint teaching it will explain Mormon teachings about the ultimate destiny of humanity. The second part of this chapter will focus on a constructive view and develop areas of the classical view to give a more complete picture of Mormon eschatology. In the concluding part of the chapter, the focus will be on the implications of these beliefs for a theology of religions, and consider which aspects of a Latter-day Saint eschatology impact on the construction of a theology of religions?

4.2 Classical Mormon eschatology

4.2a The spirit world¹⁹⁶

Latter-day Saints believe that the spirit leaves the body immediately upon death: “The transition from time into eternity is immediate.” As the physical self breathes its last breath, the spirit self passes through a thin veil separating this world from the next” (Millet & McConkie, 1986: 15).¹⁹⁷ This happens for all of humankind. At death a partial judgment takes place where spirits are assigned to either spirit paradise or spirit prison.¹⁹⁸ This builds on the teaching of the Bible, but Latter-day Saints would suggest that it is more clearly taught in the *Book of Mormon*:

¹⁹⁶ Although premortal existence can be referred to as a spirit world this is not to be confused with the post-mortal spirit world to which the assignation is usually affixed.

¹⁹⁷ Latter-day Saints prefer the term “spirit” to ‘soul’ to designate the incorporeal part of the human that cannot die. This is because, in Latter-day Saint belief, the soul is actually the body and spirit combined. Hence, the body and spirit of humanity while in mortality could be properly termed a soul (see Abraham 3:7); similarly the resurrected form could also be so designated (see Alma 40: 23 and D&C 88:15-16).

¹⁹⁸ The term spirit prison while mostly applying to a section of the spirit world can also be correctly applied to the whole of the spirit world in Latter-day Saint teaching. All spirits are awaiting a physical Resurrection and can be seen to be in prison or captive without a body: “For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138: 50 see also Moses 7: 55-57); “I know it is a startling idea to say that the Prophet and the persecutor of the Prophet, all go to prison together... but they have not got their bodies yet, consequently they are in prison” (Young, 1856: 95). It is

And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise... And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil... and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil. Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their Resurrection (Alma 40: 12-14).

Latter-day Saints teach that the person, including their associated character and personality, who exists in this life will continue; it is on this basis that individuals are assigned to either paradise or prison (see Alma 34: 32-34). Latter-day Saints, therefore, adopt an exclusivist position with regard to the immediate fate of humanity after death, teaching that only baptized, righteous Latter-day Saints will be in spirit paradise.¹⁹⁹ As explored in the scripture above (Alma 40: 12-14), Latter-day Saints believe that this assignation is only temporary until the Resurrection. The full application of this, for a theology of religions, will need to be considered following an examination of the beliefs about judgement post Resurrection.²⁰⁰

4.2a (i) Spirit Paradise

The *Book of Mormon* describes paradise as “a state of rest, a state of peace, where people shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40: 12). This is a place of happiness where the spirits of those who abide “expand in wisdom, where they have

using this definition that Latter-day Saints believe Christ went to preach to the spirits in prison (meaning the part of spirit prison called paradise (D&C 138 esp. vv 18-21). This idea is explored further in section 4.3.

¹⁹⁹ Any exceptions are explored below in section 4.3.

²⁰⁰ See sections 4.2b-d.

respite from all their troubles, and where care and sorrow do not annoy” (Smith. J.F. 1939: 448).

The inheritors of spirit paradise cannot do anything to affect this hopeful judgement:

[T]hose who have the privilege of accepting the Gospel, and who do so— honouring their covenants and enduring in faith— will at death be escorted into the paradise of God, the day of their probation being complete. None such can fall, none such can lose the sure promises of eternal life which are now theirs, the day of their probation being past (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 61).

Latter-day Saints believe that those who enter paradise, are those who have acquired the knowledge of the Gospel, accepted Christ, followed him, joined his Church, and have partaken of his ordinances.²⁰¹ These spirits in paradise await a Resurrection which will occur when Christ comes to earth again. This wait is without the cares and struggles that are associated with earthly life and the possession of a mortal body. What will continue in paradise, however, will be the relationships developed during mortality: “I have a father, brothers, children, and friends who have gone to the world of spirits... They are only absent for a moment. They are in the spirit, and we shall soon meet again” (Smith, J. 1938: 259).²⁰² This state of rest and peace is indicative of the exclusivist position outlined earlier: only those who accept Christ within the confines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, receive his ordinances,²⁰³ and follow his teachings receive this inheritance.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ All of which have been explored in the previous chapters on christology and pneumatology.

²⁰² There are other aspects to what Latter-day Saints believe about a person’s activities in paradise. These will be explored in section 4.3a below.

²⁰³ See section 3.2c (ii).

²⁰⁴ The implications of such an exclusivist position for the immediate destiny of humankind will be explored in section 4.4.

4.2a (ii) Spirit Prison

For Latter-day Saints, inheritors of the spirit prison are “those who [have] died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets” (D&C 138:32). Effectively, anyone who is not a faithful Latter-day Saint on this earth will find themselves condemned to prison until the Resurrection. Their experience will be vastly different to those in paradise. The spirit prison is also known as “hell” in Latter-day Saint teaching, and is the place in which spirits will suffer for a period of time until the second Resurrection when they are assigned their permanent residence.²⁰⁵ “Hell, then, is a temporary quarter of the spirit world where the wicked are restrained in order for justice to be served and to give them a chance to repent” (Peterson, 1986: 38). Latter-day Saints believe this punishment has its basis in scripture (for example see Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31; Isa. 49:8–9; John 5:25) and builds on a theology of the sacrifice of Christ. In describing his sacrifice, Latter-day Saints believe that Christ also issued a warning: “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I” (D&C 19: 16–17). It is in the spirit prison that Latter-day Saints believe these souls must pay their penalties for sin.²⁰⁶ There are scriptural passages that describe the punishment of hell as “endless” or “eternal” (see Mark 3:29; Jude 1:7; Alma 3:26), but these are interpreted in light of a revelation to Joseph Smith:

And surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless... For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for

²⁰⁵ There are various understandings of the term hell, one of which is explored here. Others will be suggested in 4.2b following and 4.2e.

²⁰⁶ The timing of these sufferings is an area of debate within Latter-day Saint teaching. It is not clear whether the suffering takes place throughout a spirit’s time in prison or at the end of the time just prior to Resurrection. The timing will have important implications and will need further development (see 4.3a).

Endless is my name. Wherefore— Eternal punishment is God’s punishment. Endless punishment is God’s punishment (D&C 19: 4, 10-12).

Hence, for Latter-day Saints, God’s punishment is endless and eternal because *he* is endless and eternal. The eternal nature of punishment refers to the giver rather than the duration.

This cleansing experience of hell will enable all to be cleansed in preparation for the Resurrection and judgement: “All who inherit a kingdom of glory will thus have earned the right through appropriate repentance” (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 24). This belief in the temporality of hell retains a fairly stringent exclusivism that provides a punishment for all those outside of the explicit confession, and following, of Christ within Latter-day Saint orthodoxy and orthopraxy. However, this is not an eternal exclusivity found in a number of mainstream Christian eschatologies. The belief in the temporality of hell weakens the rigorous separationism highlighted thus far. In Latter-day Saint belief, God loves all of his children and does not want to cut them off for eternity. The implications of this love will need to be developed further in light of the next stage of eschatology: Resurrection and judgement. This next stage has the potential either to weaken separationism further or to re-establish it.²⁰⁷ The softening of separation can also be suggested through the cleansing experience of hell, which takes away a barrier to salvation: sin and uncleanness. If no unclean thing can dwell in God’s presence, surely the cleansing experience of hell (instead of the atonement) could be used to suggest this barrier is removed, and salvation made possible. This is speculative and assumes freedom from sin as the only criteria for salvation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ The differences and basis for a hopeful reading of punishment will be explored in the constructive section (4.3) of this chapter, especially as it impinges on a theology of religions.

²⁰⁸ Further exploration of this will be developed in 4.2c.

4.2b The Resurrection

Following a spirit's time in the Spirit world, where the "body without the spirit is dead" (James 2: 26), Latter-day Saints believe that, at the last day, all will be resurrected where the body and spirit are reunited eternally (see Alma 11: 42-45). For Latter-day Saints this is one of the great blessings of the atonement of Christ, immortality is a free gift to all of humanity through the grace of Christ evident in his Resurrection. This can be seen as a reward for the keeping of the first estate, in that all who passed from the first to the second estate will receive this blessing.²⁰⁹ Those who were cast out of heaven for rebellion will live forever as spirits. The resurrected body is the same as the immortal body of the Father and the Son as evidenced for Latter-day Saints in the Resurrection of Christ: "handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"(Luke 24: 39).²¹⁰ In the *Book of Mormon* the resurrected body is

²⁰⁹ "The First Estate in Latter-day Saint teaching is the premortal existence. Keeping the first estate is related to the war that took place in heaven (see Rev 12:7-11). The war in heaven, for Latter-day Saints, was essentially a war of ideologies, a "war of words, a tumult of opinions" (McConkie, 1973: 518). In the "Grand Council of Heaven" all of the spirit children of Heavenly Father were gathered together and presented with two plans to enable those spirits to come to earth, gain a body and return to live with God. "The war was primarily over how and in what manner the plan of salvation would be administered to the forthcoming human family upon the earth. The issues involved such things as agency, how to gain salvation, and who should be the Redeemer" (BD: War in Heaven). Christ presented the Father's plan that advocated the agency of humanity as a fundamental principle of earth's existence ensuring that while not everybody would be saved they would have the opportunity to choose while on earth:

It was evident that if given agency, some persons would fall short of complete salvation; Lucifer and his followers wanted salvation to come automatically to all who passed through mortality, without regard to individual preference, agency, or voluntary dedication (see Isa. 14: 12-20; Luke 10: 18; Rev. 12: 4-13; D&C 29: 36-38; Moses 4: 1-4). The spirits who thus rebelled and persisted were thrust out of heaven and cast down to the earth without mortal bodies, "and thus came the devil and his angels" (D&C 29: 37; see also Rev. 12: 9; Abraham. 3: 24-28) (BD: War in Heaven).

In this war in heaven one third of the hosts of heaven rejected Christ's appointment as Saviour and were cast out of heaven with Satan, never to experience mortality, receive a body or a hope of salvation. The two thirds who remained had chosen Christ as their Saviour and accepted the plan as laid out by the Father. This choice of accepting Christ in the premortal existence has implications for the life after death outline here.

²¹⁰ Though there may be differences in the appearance of immortal bodies they share the same characteristics of immortality and flesh and bone (see also D&C 130: 22 for a statement on God's corporeality).

called both “spiritual” and “immortal” (Alma 11: 45); for Latter-day Saints the emphasis on a spiritual body does not suggest a spirit body, rather a body that contains a spirit which does not die or corrupt: “At that moment ‘our vile body’ shall ‘be fashioned like unto his [God’s] glorious body’ (Philippians 3:21)” (Callister, 2000: 170). This “restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous” (Alma 11: 44). This universal Resurrection moves Latter-day Saint theology from the binary separation at death to the possibility that the Resurrection has universalist overtones. Again, the possible universalism suggested is dependent on the next stage of eschatology. A universal Resurrection does not necessarily lead to universalism; there is the possibility of the Resurrection of the just and the damned (see John 5: 29; Mosiah 16: 11; 3 Ne. 26: 5). The rigorous separationism may be maintained or strengthened dependent of the results of the Resurrection. Within Latter-day Saint belief there are believed to be different times for the Resurrection to take place:

Two great Resurrections await the inhabitants of the earth: one is the first Resurrection, the Resurrection of life, the Resurrection of the just; the other is the second Resurrection, the Resurrection of damnation, the Resurrection of the unjust (John 5:28–29; Rev. 20; D&C 76)... At the end of the millennium, the second Resurrection begins. In the forepart of this Resurrection of the unjust those destined to come forth will be ...[the] wicked and carnal in mortality, and who have suffered the wrath of God in hell “until the last Resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work” D&C 76:85). Their final destiny is to inherit a telestial glory (McConkie B. 1979: 640).

The different timings of the Resurrections could be used to suggest that the suffering identified earlier as part of the spirit prison takes place at the end of the spirit’s time in prison. This would carry on until the allotted time of Resurrection. Again, this is speculation but may assist in

widening the hope of salvation.²¹¹ It is to the nature of judgement and salvation that this classical exploration of Latter-day Saint eschatology now moves.²¹²

4.2c Judgement

At the same time as the Resurrection, Latter-day Saints believe that all of humanity will be judged: “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14: 10-12). In this sense all, through the atonement of Christ, overcome the first spiritual death occasioned by the Fall: “[t]he Atonement corrects the first spiritual death without any effort on their own” (Callister, 2000: 450). Humanity is brought back into God’s presence to be judged by him:

The scriptures teach that every person, saint or sinner, will return to the presence of God after the Resurrection. It may be only a temporary reunion in his presence, but justice requires that all that was lost in Adam be restored in Jesus Christ. Every person will return to God’s presence, behold his face, and be judged for his own works. Then, those who have obeyed the Gospel will be able to stay in his presence, while all others will have to be shut out of his presence a second time and will thus die what is called a second spiritual death (Matthews, 1990: 262; see also Alma 11: 42-45).

One of the purposes of the suffering in the spirit prison is to enable all humanity to stand before God; for this to take place each person must be clean (see Moses 6:57; 1 Ne. 10:11). The cleansing that occurs in the spirit world is, however, incomplete if not attached to the sanctifying process of the atonement and the Holy Ghost. Without this sanctifying process the time in God’s

²¹¹ See the constructive section of this chapter (4.3).

²¹² In the constructive section of this chapter it will be necessary to unpack this seeming universality and its associated implications (4.2e).

presence is limited and a person is not able to “dwell” in the Father’s presence (1 Ne. 10: 21). The purifying process of the punishment in the spirit prison is not identical when compared to the sanctifying process of Christ and the Holy Ghost. The sanctifying process retains the necessity of a relationship with the Godhead not available in the suffering of “hell”.²¹³ For Latter-day Saints, judgement is carried out by Christ (see John 5: 22); in this event all will confess that he is God: `

Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgement of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye (Mosiah 27: 31).

However, as intimated in this passage, the day of judgement will involve a degree of a person convicting themselves and, in some ways, can be seen to be the person’s own decision. God is the judge; but people are condemned by themselves (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009: 271).

²¹³ In holding the belief that a person satisfies the demands of justice through suffering in the spirit prison, Latter-day Saints emphasize the multiple purposes of the atonement explored in an examination of a Latter-day Saint christology (chapter 2, especially section 2.3a). The atonement is not just about paying the penalty for a person’s sins; rather it is also about making of the person a new creature in Christ (and the Holy Ghost). For Latter-day Saints, the atonement is not just about sins but also the transformation of the individual. Only through experiencing both facets can a person hope for more than immortality and a brief moment in the presence of the Father:

The entrance requirements for celestial life are simply higher than merely satisfying the demands of justice. For that reason, paying for our sins will not bear the same fruit as repenting of our sins. Justice is a law of balance and order and it must be satisfied, either through our payment or His. But if we decline the Saviour’s invitation to let Him carry our sins, and then satisfy justice by ourselves, we will not yet have experienced the complete rehabilitation that can occur through a combination of divine assistance and genuine repentance. Working together, those forces have the power permanently to change our hearts and lives, preparing us for celestial life (Hafen, 1989: 8-9; see also Wilcox, 2009: 71-73).

Living in Christ and the Holy Ghost provides more than just “clean hands” but also a “pure heart” which prepares a person more completely for judgement.

At judgement, Latter-day Saints believe that individuals, as children of God, will be assigned their place in the eternities based on their acceptance of Christ and their works in mortal life (Mosiah 16: 10-11). Often Latter-day Saints are accused of having a “salvation by works” belief system (see for example Blomberg, 1997b: 176). This perception has its basis in scriptures from the *Book of Mormon*, as well as the New Testament:

Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another; yea, will ye persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this Church, having been sanctified by the Holy [Ghost], and they do *bring forth works which are meet for repentance*—(Alma 5:54 emphasis added; see also 2 Ne. 25: 23; Article of Faith 3; James 2: 14-19; Matt 5: 20).

Although quoting these passages suggests a salvation by works, this is not the belief of Latter-day Saints. In recent years there have been attempts by leading Latter-day Saint writers and speakers to redress the balance that has created this impression of Latter-day Saint belief (see for example Millet, 2003; and Wilcox, 2009).²¹⁴ The separate mind-set still survives in varying degrees and places: “conversations with numerous Mormon missionaries, Mormon friends and

²¹⁴ The perceived salvation by works emphasis by Latter-day Saints could be seen to be a part of the natural sect development explained by Mauss that wanted to maintain an “optimum tension”. In the process of becoming more accepted in American society there was a necessity for Latter-day Saints to remain separate and not emphasize the commonality of belief (in this case of salvation by grace): “...success in the one case involves the loss or erosion of a separate identity through assimilation, while in the other case success requires the maintenance indefinitely of a separate identity” (1994: 8, see also Stark, 1984). Now that the Latter-day Saint position is more uniquely established in American society the perceived tensions no longer need to be there and the areas of convergence can be more confidently explored without fear of assimilation. This is evidenced in the growing number of works that cover areas of mainstream Christian and Latter-day Saint convergence from a Latter-day Saint perspective (see for example Musser & Paulsen, 2007). Also Millet sounds a warning voice toward too great an assimilation:

...[O]f course we accept and rely on the grace of the Saviour. We have always done so. That’s nothing new. Of course we’re Christian. But there are some doctrinal differences between our beliefs and those of our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths, and we must never, in an effort to build bridges of understanding or friendship, minimize our differences. Our strength lies in our distinctiveness (2003: v-vi).

ex-Mormons suggest to me that an orientation toward works is still well entrenched” (Blomberg, 1997b: 177).

Latter-day Saints believe that there is no hope for individuals (or humanity as a whole) without the grace of Jesus Christ, received, in part, through the Gift of the Holy Ghost. However, without the works performed, there is no evidence of the grace being active in a person’s life, and hence there is no possibility of a hopeful judgement:

True faith, however, always manifests itself in *faithfulness*... Good works evidence our faith, our desire to remain in the covenant with Christ. But these good works, though *necessary* to our salvation, are not *sufficient* to save us (Millet, 2003: 116).

Latter-day Saints believe that humanity will be judged according to the works they have done in mortality, as evidence that the gift of grace has been received (Psalm 62: 11-12; Prov. 24: 12; Matt 7: 21; Rom. 2:6; 2 Ne. 28: 23; Mosiah 3: 23-24). “We will be judged according to our works, not according to the merits of our works, but to the extent that our works manifest to God who and what we have *become*” (Millet, 2003: 122). This means, for Latter-day Saints, new creatures of the Holy Ghost in Christ. This belief in the importance of works as evidence of grace will build, to some degree, on the importance of moral acts as evidence of a relationship with the Godhead.²¹⁵

Although all will be resurrected, a number of people will find themselves outside of exaltation even though they eventually confess Christ.²¹⁶ However, the traditional binary destinations of heaven and hell as the final destiny of humanity are rejected in Latter-day Saint

²¹⁵ How this affects a non-Latter-day Saint’s works as evidence of their reception of grace, and being in a relationship with the Godhead, will be explored in 4.3c.

²¹⁶ Latter-day Saints believe that the spirits by themselves would exist eternally without the Resurrection. But this would mean that all people would be like the devil and his angels, and become subject to him (2 Ne. 9:9). Only through the gift of Resurrection can a person be prepared to receive a degree of glory.

teaching and replaced with the concept of the “degrees of glory” to which this work now turns.²¹⁷

4.2d Degrees of Glory

As elucidated earlier, Latter-day Saints consider the “reward” for keeping the First Estate to be Resurrection, but it also extends to the reception of a degree of glory. All who have ever lived on the earth (apart from sons of perdition)²¹⁸ will receive a place in one of three kingdoms: celestial, terrestrial and telestial.²¹⁹ Judgement is on the assumption that all are deserving of different levels of reward (salvation), while accepting the basic premise of “degrees of glory”.

²¹⁷ The timings of the Resurrection and judgement, while described as one event, actually take place on different occasions depending on the degree of glory which the person inherits:

Release for the righteous spirits comes at the beginning of the millennium. At this time, the heirs of the celestial kingdom will come forth from paradise and receive glorified, celestial bodies in the “morning” of the first Resurrection, the Resurrection of the just (See 1 Cor. 15:20–42; D&C 88:97–98; D&C 76:17.)

Following the glorious Resurrection of the celestial candidates, the heirs of the terrestrial glory will be resurrected. Their Resurrection too, though later, is still considered a part of the first Resurrection (See D&C 76:71–80; 2 Ne. 9:26.) Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated that the terrestrial heirs will come forth in “the afternoon of the first Resurrection” which takes place after the “Lord has ushered in the millennium” (see also D&C 88:99) (Peterson, 1986: 36).

²¹⁸ The destiny of those called ‘sons of perdition’ will be explored below (4.2d (iv)).

²¹⁹ There is reference to (two of) these kingdoms in the writings of Paul:

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the Resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption...” (1 Cor 15: 40–42).

Latter-day Saints see this doctrine as eternal, though not necessarily biblically based. The knowledge of the degrees of glory would be seen as having the status of some of the “plain and precious things taken away from the [Bible]” (1 Ne 13: 28) and restored by Joseph Smith.

4.2d (i) The nature of salvation

There is a debate in Latter-day Saint writings about the nature of salvation and its relationship to the degrees of glory and the concept of exaltation. McConkie has spoken of three different usages of the term salvation:

1. *Unconditional or general salvation*, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to Gospel law, consists in the mere fact of being resurrected. In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality; it is the inseparable connection of body and spirit so that the resurrected personage lives forever. ***This kind of salvation eventually will come to all mankind...***
2. *Conditional or individual salvation*, that which comes by grace coupled with Gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God...
3. *Salvation* in its true and full meaning is synonymous with *exaltation* or *eternal life* and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom. With few exceptions this is the salvation of which the scriptures speak. It is the salvation which the saints seek (McConkie, B. 1979: 669-70 emphasis in bold added, italics in the original).

Throughout this thesis, up to this point, when salvation has been spoken of it has been referring to the third type referred to by McConkie: exaltation. However, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* suggests that “some degree of salvation will come to all of God’s children... It is evident from such teachings that there are different degrees or levels of salvation in the afterlife” (Burton, 1992: 1256-7).²²⁰

²²⁰ A similar explanation of the various meanings of salvation can be found within *True to the Faith* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), an official publication of the Church.

Recently, this multiplicity of use of the word “salvation” has been reemphasized in the Church’s General Conference (see Oaks, 1998; Nelson, 2008) which, to some degree, has left a dialectical tension on which a negative or a positive eschatology can be built. This thesis builds on the more positive view as it extends the scope of salvation, while recognizing that others may feel the negative view is valid. A passage from, the *Doctrine and Covenants* suggests the orthodoxy of the more positive view:

That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him; Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him. Wherefore, he saves all except them... (D&C 76: 42-44).

The word “might” in this passage, taken out of context, could be used to suggest a limited salvation, in the sense that Christ has offered salvation to all but that might not be accepted by all. Thus, the stringent exclusivism explored in the examinations of christology and pneumatology is on this basis, understanding salvation as synonymous with exaltation (or a fulness of salvation). However, the qualification that “he saves all except them” (meaning the sons of perdition), suggests that salvation is a general gift given to all. Thus, there being gradations of salvation, aids the present thesis in understanding the fate of those outside of the highest degree (exaltation). It is the argument of this thesis that this hopeful interpretation is the one most closely allied with scripture and the writings of Latter-day Saint leaders:

However, as *all* mankind will receive Salvation, in some degree or form, (Except the Sons of perdition. D&C 76:31-44) to those who are initiated into the Church there is still another “feature” or principle of the Gospel even more “attractive” than that of “Salvation,” name the principle of Exaltation to a fulness of power and glory in the presence of God (Smith, J. F. 1895: 654 emphasis added)

There remain some leaders and academics who reject this (see for example McConkie & Ostler, 2000; McConkie, B. 1977). However, rejection of the broadening of salvation leads to a less hopeful and more binary understanding of the love and salvific desire of God; and seems at odds with the scriptures and writings elucidated earlier. The understanding of salvation as exaltation is, perhaps, a result of the interchangeability with which the words exaltation and salvation are used: in some Latter-day Saint writings the word “salvation” is used when “exaltation” is what is meant (see for example Anderson, 2009).²²¹ A belief in degrees of glory also provides an elimination of the binary fate of humanity. God grants salvation as a free gift to all through the grace of Christ. It is on this basis that exaltation and salvation will be differentiated in the language of this chapter.²²²

Even with this hopeful definition of salvation, it is possible within Mormonism to retain an element of separationism with regard to exaltation. Outside of the highest degree of glory Latter-day Saints teach that people will “be damned; their eternal progression will be cut short...” (McConkie, B. 1979: 669).²²³ It is therefore possible, in Latter-day Saint teaching, to

²²¹ It is evident that this work is aided by the more hopeful understanding of the nature of salvation and would argue that the conclusions reached are fully supported by the evidence presented. However, it must recognize that there will be divergence and not just on the use of salvation as a synonym for exaltation, but on a more basic level that what is here described as salvation actually is not: “Salvation is exaltation. That is the sum and substance of the whole matter” (McConkie, B. 1971: 38).

²²² The implications of such for a more universalistic understanding of salvation (degrees of glory) will need to be re-examined (see sections 4.3 and 4.4). The implications of such a division in terms of exaltation for a theology of religions remain and will be returned to in the final section of this chapter (4.4).

²²³ This difference of reward can also be seen to extend to the types of resurrected bodies received in the different degrees of glory:

In the Resurrection there will be different kinds of bodies; they will not all be alike. The body a man receives will determine his place hereafter. There will be celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies, and telestial bodies, and these bodies will differ as distinctly as do bodies here ... Bodies will be quickened according to the kingdom which they are judged worthy to enter. Elder Orson Pratt many years ago in writing of the Resurrection and the kind of bodies which would be raised in these kingdoms said: “In every species of animals and plants, there are many resemblances in the general outlines and many specific differences characterizing the individuals of each species. So in the Resurrection. There will be several classes of resurrected bodies; some celestial, some terrestrial, some telestial, and some sons of perdition. Each of these classes will *differ* from the

receive both salvation and damnation. How can this damnation be part of a reward? What part does a person's religion play in their level of reward? These are questions that will be explored in an examination of the three degrees of glory.²²⁴

4.2d (ii) The Celestial Kingdom

It is the celestial kingdom in Latter-day Saint belief that comes closest to the belief of heaven in mainstream Christianity.²²⁵ It is here that exaltation can be found.²²⁶ The *Doctrine and Covenants* gives physical descriptions of the celestial kingdom and also a great degree of detail as to who will be the inheritors of that glory:

The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell. I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire; Also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son. I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold (D&C 137: 1-4).

In this passage Smith attempts to use language to describe his experience, but the most he can accomplish is similes. This inability becomes more understandable in light of the description of

others by *prominent* and *marked distinctions*; yet, in each, considered by itself, there will be found many resemblances as well as distinctions. *There will be some physical peculiarity by which each individual in every class can be identified* (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 2: 286-287).

²²⁴ Similarly, these tensions between a universalistic understanding of salvation and a more binary understanding of exaltation (and the nature of damnation) will need to be more fully explored in the next section of this chapter (4.3) especially because of the debate about the universalistic understanding of salvation in Latter-day Saint writings.

²²⁵ See below 4.2d (iii) for a suggestion that the terrestrial is the closest in description to traditional conceptions of heaven.

²²⁶ As outlined in 4.2d (i).

the telestial surpassing all understanding (see D&C 76: 89). The celestial kingdom is the place of inheritance where people will “dwell in the presence of God and... Christ forever and ever” (D&C 76: 62).²²⁷ The qualifications necessary for celestial glory in Latter-day Saint belief are elucidated as follows:

They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given— That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy [Ghost] by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true (D&C 76: 51-54).

Within this passage it can be seen that those who are to receive exaltation:

1. *Received the testimony of Jesus and believed on his name.* This designation explicitly suggests that no one can receive celestial glory in ignorance of Christ. Only those who hear the testimony and believe in Christ explicitly can have a hope. The exact nature of this belief is explained in the chapter on christology but it is important to note that there is an emphasis in Latter-day Saint on orthodoxy and not to deviate from accepted parameters:²²⁸ “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God” (Smith, J. 1938: 345). Latter-day Saints believe it is through Christ that a person is justified and sanctified in

²²⁷ This is supported by a further passage where Smith saw Christ seated on the right hand of God in the vision of heaven (D&C 76: 22-24) echoing the vision of Stephen (see Acts 7: 55ff).

²²⁸ See both chapters 2 and 3 for an exploration of the importance of correct knowledge. In this context the knowledge of Christ Latter-day Saints would expect includes believing Christ to be the Son of God; the “only begotten” of the Father (John 3: 16), and physically separate from the other members of the Godhead; though existing in a unity of purpose and action.

Latter-day Saint belief; only through accepting him and having his atonement activated in their lives can a person hope for a celestial inheritance.

2. *[B]aptized after the manner of his burial... (and) receive the Holy [Ghost]*. This description refers to the ordinances of baptism and confirmation as practised within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As explored in the chapter on pneumatology, any attempt at carrying out these ordinances without that priesthood authority or in the manner outlined makes these void. Hence, only baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints receive exaltation.

3. *Keeping the commandments*. Joseph Smith reiterated this qualification in teaching: “Any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too” (1938: 331). In Latter-day Saint teaching, people who desire exaltation need to “endure to the end” in keeping the commandments of the celestial law (see 2 Ne 31: 16). It is not limited to specific teachings and commandments but all that are found within Mormonism: “It does not mean any one thing; it means all things. It is the fulness of obedience: it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Whitney, 1910: 53). Hence, only *faithful*, baptized Latter-day Saints can hope for exaltation.

4. *[S]ealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise*. This condition refers, in part, to having undergone the sealing ordinance of marriage within the Temple. More fully, however, it has reference to completing all of the ordinances of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,²²⁹ having kept the associated covenants enabling the ordinances to be sealed or ratified as

²²⁹ See section 3.2c (ii) for a full exploration of the sealing role of the Holy Ghost.

efficacious by the Holy Ghost.²³⁰ It is in this doctrine that Latter-day Saint beliefs are extended further to include three levels within the celestial kingdom:

In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage); And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase (D&C 131:1-4).

There is no further information as to what is entailed in the lower two levels, only that the inheritors are single, recipients of salvation and are ministering angels (see D&C 132: 16). To achieve exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom Latter-day Saints believe a person must be married: “Eternal marriage is the gate through which those intent upon eternal life must enter” (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 135).²³¹ As a result of this “sealing” Latter-day Saints believe that family relationships continue within the celestial kingdom (see D&C 130: 2). This is only efficacious when sealed by the Holy Ghost under the authority of the priesthood: “whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in

²³⁰ Those ordinances are outlined and explored further in the chapter of pneumatology (3.2c (iii)) but include baptism, confirmation, ordination (for men), washing and anointing, endowment and Temple marriage.

²³¹ This seems at odds with the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt 22: 29-30). Latter-day Saints interpret this text to only have reference to the immediate audience that Christ was addressing:

To properly understand the present scriptural text, one need only ask the standard question in scriptural interpretation: To whom is the text directed? To whom is Christ speaking? The answer to this query in the specific instance is directed to the Sadducees, a religious sect that rejected Christ, his Gospel, his priesthood, and even the doctrine of Resurrection. In broader terms, the text applies to all others who reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its sealing powers. None such have any claim upon a sealing bond between marriage partners or in the family unit (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 99).

Latter-day Saints believe that it is *they* (those not of the true faith) who neither marry nor are given in marriage (see also D&C 132: 15-19).

my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens” (D&C 132: 46, see also Matt 16: 19).

The qualifications for a celestial glory reemphasize the exaltation exclusivisms of Latter-day Saint christology, pneumatology and ecclesiology.²³² There is an exception in classical Mormon theology to the conditions for exaltation for the innocent, meaning little children and those who are not accountable because of their lack of mental understanding (see McConkie, B. 1977). The exaltation of this group, however, is not outside of the grace of Christ. *The Book of Mormon* teaches:

Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children. And ~~their~~ little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins. But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism! (Moro. 8: 10-12; see also Moro. 8; Mosiah 15: 25; Mosiah 3: 18; D&C 137: 10; D&C 129: 46).

In Latter-day Saint belief, baptism is for the remission of sins; children who die before the age of eight (see D&C 68: 25-28) are not accountable for their actions and are innocent: “Satan cannot tempt little children in this life, nor in the spirit world, nor after the Resurrection. Little children who die before reaching the years of accountability will not be tempted” (Smith, J. Fielding,

²³² Explored in chapters 2 and 3.

1999 [1954-1956], vol 2: 56-57). One of the free gifts of the atonement, in Latter-day Saint belief, is exaltation for those unaccountable and innocent.²³³

The innocent include those who are mentally unable to comprehend completely the difference between good and evil. This is evident from the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the writings of Latter-day Saint leaders. Extending the definition of the innocent to include those “that hath no understanding” (D&C 29: 50), meaning those who lack the necessary mental capacity, McConkie taught:

It is with them as it is with little children. They never arrive at the years of accountability and are considered as though they were little children. If because of some physical deficiency, or for some other reason unknown to us, they never mature in the spiritual and moral sense, then they never become accountable for sins. They need no

²³³ This is not limited to Latter-day Saint children:

This would mean the children of every race [and religion]. All the spirits that come to this world come from the presence of God and, therefore, must have been in his kingdom. ... Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and all who rebelled were cast out; therefore, all who remained are entitled to the blessings of the Gospel (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 2: 55).

These children are resurrected at the age which they die:

...the mother who laid down her little child [in a grave], being deprived of the privilege, the joy, and the satisfaction of bringing it up to manhood or womanhood in this world, would after the Resurrection, have all the joy, satisfaction and pleasure, and even more than it would have been possible to have had in mortality, in seeing her child grow to the full measure of the stature of its spirit... It matters not whether these tabernacles mature in this world, or have to wait to mature in the world to come... the body will develop either in time or in eternity, to the full stature of the spirit, and when the mother is deprived of the pleasure and joy of rearing her babe to manhood or womanhood in this life, through the hand of death, that privilege will be renewed to her hereafter, and she will enjoy it to a fuller fruition than it would be possible for her to do here. When she does it there, it will be with certain knowledge that the results will be without failure; whereas here, the results are unknown until after we have passed the test (Smith, J. F. 1939: 452-54).

baptism; they are alive in Christ; and they will receive, inherit, and possess in eternity on the same basis as do all children (McConkie, B. 1977: 6).²³⁴

For the innocent, Latter-day Saints believe, exaltation is a gift bestowed by Christ freely through his atonement. This does not, however, negate the need for belief in Christ: “The Lord takes many away, even in infancy, that they may escape the envy of man, and the sorrows and evils of this present world; they were too pure, too lovely, to live on earth” (Smith, J. 1938: 196-97) suggesting that those within this group had achieved the status needed before they entered mortality. This status included (as for all) a belief in Christ:

We learned about Christ and chose to follow him when he was chosen to be our Saviour and Redeemer. We understood and knew the Gospel plan and shouted for joy at the privilege of getting our mortal bodies as part of that great plan of salvation. Returning pure and spotless to their Maker, children—who in reality are adults—will again have that Gospel knowledge which once was theirs (McConkie, B. 1977: 7).

Why, however, they are different is left to the knowledge and justice of God.²³⁵

While this belief is hopeful for Latter-day Saints and exemplifies the love of God, it does not provide a basis on which to build a theology of religions. The exaltation of the innocent applies to all who are not accountable regardless of religion. The innocent receive exemption

²³⁴ Latter-day Saints do not have a traditional belief in “original sin”. Adam’s original transgression has been forgiven (Moses 6: 53) and is not transferred to his children: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (Article of Faith 2).

²³⁵ A suggestion is made that the innocent are different because of faith already acquired, as such probation is not required:

He was a beautiful baby. At the service, obviously under the direction of the Spirit, Bro. Smith told of the Prophet Joseph Smith saying that some spirits were too pure to go through this life, that they had advanced so far in the Spirit World that their only need was to obtain a body and then go back for the work they had to do. He said this was one of those spirits and I knew that it was so (McConkie, J. 2003: 124).

from ordinances and a works (on the earth) based reward according to the justice and mercy of God, irrespective of any other criteria.

Latter-day Saints are, therefore, christologically, pneumatologically and ecclesiologically exclusivist in relation to exaltation: christologically in that only through accepting Christ and following his example can a person hope for exaltation; pneumatologically because to receive exaltation a person must have received the Gift of the Holy Ghost through the ordinance of confirmation and have the Holy Spirit of promise seal all of the ordinances received; ecclesiologically because those ordinances will only be sealed if carried out under the auspices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In a description of the celestial kingdom there is a radical exclusivism that cannot be denied. Only those within the bounds of belief in Christ and the ordinances of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can have a hope for exaltation. However, there is not an exclusivity of salvation; rather there is a salvific universality that must not be underplayed as the lower two kingdoms are explored. One can detect, therefore, multiple densities and levels of exclusivity in relation to the rewards that are being given. While there is a “celestial exclusivity”, an examination of the lower two kingdoms will reveal a level of universality through which all of humanity is saved with a degree of salvation. Thus to term Latter-day Saints as simply exclusivist would be erroneous.

4.2d (iii) The Terrestrial Kingdom

Outside of the celestial kingdom people are damned, meaning their progression is stopped.²³⁶ Latter-day Saints believe that one of the greatest blessings of exaltation is eternal progression, or the continuation of seed forever. Those people within the terrestrial and telestial

²³⁶ The exact nature of damnation within Latter-day Saint belief will be explored in section 4.2e of this chapter.

kingdoms remain single and outside of the family organization.²³⁷ The terrestrial kingdom while not comparing to the celestial does, however, surpass “in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion” (D&C 76: 91). As with the celestial kingdom it has been suggested that in the terrestrial kingdom “there are several degrees” (Penrose, 1922: 29-30).²³⁸ Those who inherit the terrestrial glory are described in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

Behold, these are they who died without law... These are they who are honourable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness. These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father. Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God (D&C 76: 72, 75-79).

Within this passage it can be seen that those who receive terrestrial glory are:

1. *Those who died without the law* (see also Rom 2: 12-15). This description refers to those who have not accepted the Gospel as found within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It has been suggested by Smith that those “without the law” applies to the “heathen”

²³⁷ Beyond this description, nothing is known about the sociality of the lower two kingdoms. For people to be outside of family groups would suggest an unrecognisability among people and without the ability to develop relationships as they did on earth. However, this could just mean that the continuation of seed is the only thing that is withheld and the same sociality could exist. This is an area of speculation that is not dealt with in the Latter-day Saint canon.

²³⁸ That Latter-day Saints believe that there are different levels in the lower kingdoms is evident from the writings of Talmage:

The three kingdoms of widely differing glories are organized on an orderly plan of gradation. We have seen that the telestial kingdom comprises several subdivisions; this also is the case, we are told, with the celestial and, by analogy, we conclude that a similar condition prevails in the terrestrial. Thus the innumerable degrees of merit amongst mankind are provided for in an infinity of graded glories (Talmage, 1968 [1912]: 83).

nations: “And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first Resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them” (D&C 45: 54). The term “heathen” could include just certain countries or, in a much broader definition, those people among all nations who could be termed “heathen” (without the law). Those so designated would, in tandem with the next qualification, have lived virtuous lives to be enabled to receive terrestrial glory. Thus, the conclusion that all but Latter-day Saints could be considered heathen and outside of salvation suggests a negativity towards other religions and demands exploration.²³⁹

2. *The honourable people of the earth blinded by the craftiness of others.* Latter-day Saints believe that inheritors of the terrestrial kingdom have rejected the Gospel because their hearts were set elsewhere. The distractions, or different priorities are elucidated by Smith:

Into the terrestrial kingdom will go all those who are honourable and who have lived clean virtuous lives, but who would not receive the Gospel... Many of these have been blinded by tradition and the love of the world, and have not been able to see the beauties of the Gospel” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 287–88).

For Latter-day Saints the standards of behaviour expected for this group raise the expectations of people who are saved in the celestial kingdom. One Latter-day Saint commentary suggests that those who receive the terrestrial glory will include many who would consider themselves to be Christian:

...[They] will enjoy the presence of the Son. Their reward will be great... However, consider their understanding of heaven. They deny the doctrine that man through the atonement of Christ can become as God. They deny the doctrine of eternal marriage. They deny the doctrine of eternal families. In effect, they deny the possibility of a

²³⁹ Section 4.4.

celestial reward. What do they expect of heaven? They hope to live eternally with Jesus. They want to be saved! They don't care about exaltation, they just want to be saved! In effect, they believe in a heaven like the terrestrial kingdom. Will they get what they want? Absolutely. Will their reward be greater than they could ever imagine? Absolutely. Will they go to heaven? Yes, they will go to the second heaven—the terrestrial kingdom (Richards, nd: 1-2).

While condemnatory of other Christian traditions, this suggests that Latter-day Saints believe that Christians will receive the reward that they desire, expect and are working towards. This does not, however, dilute the exaltation exclusivity prevalent in Latter-day Saint eschatology; because someone gets what they desire does not suggest they would not have wanted more if they had been offered it, or were aware it existed.

The importance of the term “honourable” in relation to a terrestrial reward does however imply that the deeds done in this life are of salvific efficacy, in that, these honourable acts result in a terrestrial salvation as opposed to a lower reward. For a theology of religions to be constructed, and an exploration of how these acts are reflective of religious teaching, further discussion will be needed.

3. *Those who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.* This group of people have been described by McConkie as being “those who are lukewarm members of the true Church and who have testimonies, but who are not true and faithful in all things” (1985:146). In the terrestrial kingdom are the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who do not continue on the path they enter at baptism. Latter-day Saints believe that to be valiant “is to live our religion, to practice what we preach, to keep the commandments. It is the manifestation of ‘pure religion’ in the lives of men; it is visiting ‘the fatherless and widows in their affliction’ and keeping ourselves ‘unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27)” (McConkie, B. 1974: 35). Thus, to

be not valiant is to live life as a member of the Church not keeping the commandments or covenants made. These people are rewarded for their initial choice, but damned for their resultant actions.

Exaltation is only available within the celestial kingdom, and while the terrestrial kingdom's glory is unimaginable it is not exaltation. With the outlined qualifications for the terrestrial kingdom one realizes the stringent conditions necessary for exaltation to occur. These beliefs indicate a loving God who wishes to reward all of his children but they do not suggest a God who rewards unconditionally, rather, it suggests a restricted exaltation of a particularist and exclusivist tone.²⁴⁰ This particularism is softened through an unimaginable reward of terrestrial salvation. Although not exaltation, the terrestrial kingdom is salvation and rewards people according to their actions (which may or may not be a reflection of the grace of Christ active in their lives).

4.2d (iv) The Telestial Kingdom

The *Doctrine and Covenants* explains that the telestial kingdom:

²⁴⁰ In arguing against unconditional love, Nelson has suggested “many verses [of scripture] affirm that the higher levels of love the Father and the Son feel for each of us—and certain divine blessings stemming from that love—are conditional” (Nelson, 2003: 20). This may be uncomfortable for some Latter-day Saints; indeed, when Nelson’s remarks were published the *Ensign* received numerous complaints. When properly developed, however, it is a coherent expression of Latter-day Saint belief. When blessings are seen as an expression of love, the realization that there are “levels” of love is the result.

Does this mean the Lord does not love the sinner? Of course not. Divine love is infinite and universal. The Savior loves both saints and sinners. The Apostle John affirmed, “We love him, because he first loved us”. And Nephi, upon seeing in vision the Lord’s mortal ministry, declared: “The world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men”. We know the expansiveness of the Redeemer’s love because He died that all who die might live again (Nelson, 2003: 20).

The level of divine love and what people receive is dependent on their acceptance and living of Gospel principles. It is only when people acknowledge the blessings (including salvation) that they receive as expressions of love, rather than a determined process that God begrudgingly follows, that they understand the love of the Godhead as perfect and universal in its application, but also as conditional.

... is so glorious as to be beyond the understanding of man. It is a doctrine fundamental in Mormonism that the meanest sinner, in the final judgment, will receive a glory which is beyond human understanding, which is so great that we are unable to describe it adequately. Those who do well will receive an even more glorious place. ...The Gospel is a Gospel of tremendous love. Love is at the bottom of it. The meanest child is loved so dearly that his reward will be beyond the understanding of mortal man (Widtsoe, 1969: 167).

Again, the reward of the telestial glory keeps intact, for Latter-day Saints, a benevolent God who seeks to reward all of his children as a reflection of the universal salvation that this kingdom is a part of. Those who receive this glory are in Latter-day Saint understanding, those:

... who received not the Gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. These are they who deny not the Holy [Ghost]... For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the Gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.... These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie... And they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end (D&C 76: 82-86, 100-101, 103, 109, 111-112).

Within this passage it can be seen that the description of those who receive telestial glory include:

1. *They who received not the Gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus.* In light of the description of those who died without the law in the terrestrial kingdom it would seem as

though this is a negative description. The description suggests that people in the telestial kingdom have consciously rejected Christ when presented with Him and his message. At some point during mortality, or in the spirit prison, a person made a conscious choice to reject the Gospel which resulted in a reward in the telestial kingdom. There is a question about how much information a person needs to have been presented with to be considered to have rejected the testimony of Jesus. The description of the telestial kingdom, when put alongside the description of the terrestrial, would suggest that the Gospel of Christ is laid out fully and plainly before a person rejects it. However, the reasoning behind this rejection needs to be balanced with those who were kept from the truth because of the craftiness of men highlighted above.²⁴¹ The distinction could be the way the person lives their lives (honourably or dishonourably) but, for Latter-day Saints, only God can make this judgement.

2. *[T]hey who deny not the Holy [Ghost]*. This seems out of place in a description of those inheriting the lowest degree of glory. However, the caveat of not denying the Holy Ghost is crucial in achieving a level of reward. Those who deny the Holy Ghost are designated as “sons of perdition”.²⁴²

3. *[T]hey who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the Gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.* This passage has a parallel in the *Book of Mormon* about the name of the Church following Christ’s visit:

²⁴¹ See section 4.2d (iii).

²⁴² Further discussion of this can be found in section 4.2 d (iv).

Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake. And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my Gospel. Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my Gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name... (3 Ne 27:7-11).

This scripture suggests that those who belong to churches that are not based on Christ and his Gospel, as understood by Mormonism, will be found in the telestial kingdom. McConkie and Ostler have outlined the prevalence of other religions, and their adherents, in the telestial kingdom:

The telestial kingdom is full of religions and priests and ministers of every kind. It is a battleground of ideas and ideologies. Professing Christians there will include self-claimed disciples of Paul declaring the Gospel of grace alone; those loyal to Apollos, or the learning of men, as articulated by the suave and sophisticated; and those claiming to follow Peter (Cephas) and the Church of Rome in thoughtless submission (2000: 538).

As a commentary on the religious beliefs of millions of people worldwide these teachings are condemnatory. However, these descriptions of religions being “man-made” are not isolated cases. As already observed *The Book of Mormon* splits the world in two:²⁴³ the Church of the Lamb of God and the great and abominable Church, or Church of the Devil (see 1 Ne 13 and 2 Ne 28). Latter-day Saints believe that any organization that is in opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints belongs to the great and abominable Church: “it is every false

²⁴³ See section 3.4.

religion, every supposed system of salvation which does not actually save and exalt man in the highest heaven of the celestial world” (McConkie, B. 1973: 551). This would include adherents to the teachings of Paul and Peter, though Latter-day Saints would argue that these are not Paul and Peter’s teachings, rather a misinterpretation of them. Included in these descriptions are people who are *supposed* Christians: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 7:21). This view of other religions needs unpacking to enable a Latter-day Saint theology of religions to be constructed.

It seems as though the negative view of other religions within Latter-day Saint teaching reaches its zenith in the description of the inheritors of the telestial kingdom. The reward available to people of other religions is comparable to murderers and whoremongers (though on a higher level), there is nothing innate to religion that gives these people any reward. Through the atonement of Christ, the most other religions can hope for is the lowest degree of glory. Other religions are in complete opposition to the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no salvific power in any organization that is outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. No matter how well meaning it is, no matter how much truth it contains, it still falls short of the knowledge and ordinances of Christ that are necessary for exaltation.

There is, however, a discrepancy which was highlighted earlier. Some of the adherents of other religions will be found in the terrestrial kingdom. It seems as though, this will not be because of their beliefs, but because of the honourableness of their lives. The issue of a standard of behaviour enabling a person to receive a greater reward has implications for a theology of religions in that some religions may demand a higher standard than others. As such, are they

more deserving of a greater reward? Do these religions, therefore, play an unknowing role in the salvation of their adherents? This may open up the possibility of a hierarchy of belief systems.²⁴⁴

4. *[T]hey who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.* Those within this designation would be the traditional recipients of “hell”. Again these are those types of people (liars, adulterers) who do not repent, accept the ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and endure to the end. Being an adulterer does not disqualify a person permanently from salvation; only insofar as it remains unrepented of in this life (see D&C 42: 22-25).

There is a hope, however, within a Latter-day Saint eschatology for all of humanity. None will receive a never ending punishment; each of the kingdoms is one of glory which surpasses understanding and so there is a reward for all. This is in stark contrast to the binary and never ending punishment of heaven and hell. The Latter-day Saint teaching on the telestial kingdom reinforces the concept of gradation of reward and levels of exclusivity. Each person will receive individualized salvation; murderers and whoremongers will receive the same kingdom as those who reject Christ, though one imagines on a lower level. This conclusion is based on the associated works reward available in the higher kingdoms. It is also important to note that each person will have paid the penalty for their actions prior to the Resurrection. Thus, for Latter-day Saints, the seriousness of sin is not overlooked or minimized.

4.2d (v) The Sons of Perdition

Latter-day Saints believe that a very small number of humans will not receive the reward of even the telestial kingdom, though they will receive Resurrection, and are known as the Sons of Perdition: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou

²⁴⁴ This will be explored in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

gavest me I have kept, and *none of them is lost, but the son of perdition*; that the scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17: 12, emphasis added). Latter-day Saints believe that the destiny of the sons of perdition is to be with Satan and outside of salvation: “And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory” (D&C 88:24). A full description of this destination is not found within Latter-day Saint teaching:

And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows; Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof; ...Wherefore, the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except those who are ordained unto this condemnation (D&C 76: 45-46, 48).

Sons of perdition are those who “cannot repent” having sinned “against the Holy Ghost” and “put Christ to open shame” (see Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 47–49). This destiny could be termed “hell” being the dwelling place of Satan and his followers, both from the pre-mortal realm and the sons of perdition from mortality (see BD: Hell; 2 Pet. 2: 4; D&C 29: 38; D&C 88: 113).²⁴⁵

Perdition highlights the teaching of Latter-day Saints that “unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82: 3). While exaltation is only available to Latter-day Saints so is complete damnation; none will be condemned in ignorance.²⁴⁶ The qualifications necessary for someone to be a son of perdition closely mirror those necessary for exaltation:

²⁴⁵ As shown by the description of spirit prison there are a number of places that could be termed “hell” (see section 4.2a (ii)).

²⁴⁶ It is notable that a person who has not known and understood “the truth with a clearness of vision wherein there is no doubt” (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 1: 49) cannot be a candidate for perdition and hence, does not impinge on the fate of the unevangelized or those of other religions. By their very definition they have not received enough light and knowledge to turn completely therefrom.

What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy (Smith, J. 1938: 358).

Even among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints most people would not be at such a level as to be able to become a son of perdition even if they were to turn away from its teachings: “The sin against the Holy Ghost requires such knowledge that it is manifestly impossible for the rank and file to commit such a sin” (Kimball, S. 1969: 123). Hence, those outside of general salvation in a degree of glory will contain only those originally from within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and none from other religions. Latter-day Saints may teach exclusivity of exaltation, but they also teach an exclusivity of eternal damnation in perdition and offer a more hopeful treatment of those of other religions.

4.2e Interim Conclusion

The classical view of Latter-day Saint eschatology raises conflicting issues for the development of a theology of religions. On the one hand, Latter-day Saint eschatology retains an unashamedly exclusivist slant as evidenced through the binary separation at death into the spirit world, and then the permanent separation into degrees of glory. For exaltation to be possible in a person’s life, the work of Christ and the Holy Ghost need to be expressly received and followed within the boundaries of the Church. In examining the fate of the religions of the world this exclusivity seems to be reinforced. A person’s level of reward is based on their actions and their beliefs have no efficacy or impact on the judgement. To suggest this, however, is to suggest that

beliefs and actions are separate and do not influence each other. This is an oversimplification that cannot be ignored and needs deeper unpacking in the remainder of this chapter.

On the other hand, there is seen to be hope for people of other religions (indeed, all people) in the general salvation that is the reward to all through the grace of Christ. In offering levels of salvation a Latter-day Saint eschatology does not ignore the reality of sin and the necessity of punishment (through hell). This enables the atonement of Christ to remain pre-eminent throughout Latter-day Saint teaching. However, the impression is that people are saved in spite of, rather than because of, their religious belief. Again, the implications of this need exploring in much greater depth.

The classical Latter-day Saint eschatology is, at the same time, hopeful and condemnatory. Salvation is offered to all, completely redefining the nature of salvation in opposition to the traditional binary separationism. This, however, is counter balanced by a separation between exaltation and other degrees of glory.

A similar debate about the nature of damnation is also to be found in Latter-day Saint writings.²⁴⁷ There are various uses of the word “damnation” in Latter-day Saint writings. McConkie has outlined four different types of damnation within Mormon belief:

1. Those who are thrust down to hell and await the day of Resurrection of damnation.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Underwood (1985) argues that there is evidence of a binary separation into saved and damned in early Mormonism. He argues that this, rather than Church teaching, was a carry over from pre-restoration teachings that were held by members of the Church. These teachings were gradually challenged and replaced during Joseph Smith’s lifetime.

²⁴⁸ In light of the classical eschatology, outlined in section 4.2a, it can be argued that this interpretation is the damnation and punishment in the spirit prison. This damnation, in Latter-day Saint thought, is temporary; Joseph Smith taught: “I call upon all men—priests, sinners and all... [to] obey the Gospel. For your religion won’t save you, and if you do not, *you will be damned, but, I do not say how long*” (Larson, 1978: 205 emphasis added).

2. Those who fail to gain an inheritance in the celestial kingdom or kingdom of God.
3. Those who become sons of perdition; and
4. Those who fail to gain exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world; even though they do gain a celestial mansion in one of the lower heavens of that world (McConkie, B. 1979: 176-177).

Elements of each type of “damnation” assists in the development of a theology of religions. All have been explored in the earlier sections of this chapter. With regard to the destiny of humankind, utilizing McConkie’s fourth type of damnation, it is possible to suggest that, for Latter day Saints, everybody outside of exaltation “will in a sense be both ‘saved’ and ‘damned’” (Underwood, 1985: 87n10). Latter-day Saints offer a more hopeful and yet, at the same time, more condemnatory view of other religions in the scope of damnation. Damnation is both a temporary punishment, in the sense that in the spirit prison the associated punishment ends, and yet it is also an unending destiny in the sense that people are forever excluded from exaltation.²⁴⁹

Latter-day Saint eschatology, therefore, highlights and reinforces levels of exclusivity developed in the previous chapters on christology and pneumatology: knowledge of Christ as understood by Latter-day Saints is imperative; an ongoing relationship with Christ and the Holy Ghost prepares people for an exaltative judgement; the reception of ordinances within the structure of the Church is similarly necessary. For exaltation to be gained, a person needs to explicitly confess and follow Christ. For salvation to be achieved, a person confesses Christ as Lord at judgement. This highlights christological exclusivism in that Latter-day Saints believe

²⁴⁹ What this means for the construction of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions will be explored in section 4.4.

that there can be no salvation (celestial or otherwise) without Christ. However, it could also suggest a christological universalism in the sense that through Christ all will be saved, but not with the same reward.

4.3 Constructive Mormon eschatology

Having established the “classical” Mormon view of eschatology, a number of themes have emerged that demand further exploration to build up a more complete picture of Latter-day Saint eschatology and its implications for a theology of religions. This constructive section will use Latter-day Saint sources to extend the scope of the classical, slightly one-dimensional and caricatured popularist, view. A vision that Joseph Smith recorded in 1836 of the celestial kingdom reveals some of the tensions and unanswered questions evident in the classical Mormon view. In this vision Joseph Smith saw his brother Alvin, and “marvelled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins” (D&C 137: 6). How could Alvin Smith, who had died before the Church was restored and, therefore, without the law, be found in a future vision of the celestial kingdom having received exaltation?²⁵⁰ How in light of all that had been revealed about explicit belief in Christ, the importance of ordinances, and the necessity of following Christ could someone be exalted? This section will explore the possibility of extending the scope of exaltation, while maintaining the multiple intensities of exclusivity elucidated earlier (christological, pneumatological, and ecclesiological) that are crucial to Latter-day Saint belief. This extended scope of exaltation will provide a more hopeful eschatology on which to build a theology of religions.

²⁵⁰ It has been argued elsewhere that Joseph Smith’s closeness to his brother Alvin was the main motivator in this doctrine (Vogel, 2004; Morain, 1998). Latter-day Saints would reject this, but this thesis sees no need to explore it here; whatever the motivation, love or revelation, the belief in a hopeful exaltation is an accepted belief within the Latter-day Saint canon.

In response to Joseph Smith's question about how Alvin Smith could receive exaltation the answer was given:

Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this Gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137: 6-9).

These verses extend the scope of exaltation exponentially; but how are they "who would have received it" to be identified? This belief is not limited to those who died without knowledge of the Gospel before the Restoration through Joseph Smith; but those throughout history and futurity to die in the same circumstance. This points to a more positive view of Latter-day Saint eschatology which, when combined with the non-binary nature of degrees of glory provides a greater hope for exaltation than suggested in the classical section. This constructive work will explore these areas of positivity to build a more complete picture of Latter-day Saint eschatology providing a basis on which to build a coherent, and full, theology of religions for Mormonism.

4.3a Post-mortem Evangelization

As outlined in the discussion of the spirit world,²⁵¹ Latter-day Saints believe that a partial judgment is made at death and the spirits are separated into paradise and prison. Those who enter paradise have their judgement fixed and cannot fall from salvation. For those in prison there is a degree of flexibility built into the plan of salvation. This reflects the belief that God will not damn someone because there was no one to preach the Gospel to them during mortality,

²⁵¹ Section 4.2a.

and that they were unable to “perform the ordinances necessary for [exaltation]” (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 30).

Latter-day Saints teach that in the spirit world, prior to Christ, there existed a gulf between paradise and prison which no one could cross. In the time between his death and Resurrection Christ “went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19).²⁵² Within areas of Christian theology this passage is used to support the possibility of post-mortem evangelism.²⁵³ Positing the conclusion of post-mortem evangelism within Latter-day Saint eschatology does not face the same concerns found in the more mainstream traditions. Within mainstream Christianity, Pinnock’s view of a post-mortem experience, based on a biblical understanding, would seem to be “unacceptable”. Indeed, with reference to Pinnock’s exegesis of 1 Peter 3 it has been argued that his “hermeneutic of hopefulness has allowed him to read conclusions into this passage, which are simply not there” (Chambers, 2002: 337). This issue is

²⁵² Latter-day Saints recognize that this passage is ambiguous and does not fully explore the details or doctrine that flows from it: “the Latter-day Saint reader ought to be reminded that without a divine dispensation we would be no better informed than our friend from other churches. Were it not for the Restoration of the Gospel and the advent of living prophets, our understanding would reach no higher than theirs” (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 30). As such, the other scriptural contributions to the understanding of this teaching will be explored in the following paragraph.

²⁵³ Pinnock posits the suggestion that “people would have an opportunity to respond to Christ after death, if they had not had the opportunity to respond before” (1992: 168), he draws on the teaching of Pannenberg. “Salvation from future judgement is still made available to those who during their lifetime encountered neither Jesus nor the Christian message” (1972: 95). Pannenberg refers to the teachings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen in suggesting a universal preaching of the Gospel message to those in hell:

The symbolic language of Jesus’ descent into hell expresses the extent to which those men who lived before Jesus’ activity and those who did [do] not know him have a share in the salvation that appeared in him... While he attributed the character of the eschatological decision for salvation or damnation to men’s encounter with him, he could call all men blessed who, because of their particular situation, had no hope except in God’s future... (1968: 272-273).

Pinnock also draws upon the same text of 1 Peter 3: 19-20 where, he argues, it ‘sounds as if the dead are given an opportunity to respond to Christ’ (1992: 169). Similarly Romans 14: 11-12 is quoted with Pinnock using the argument that because everyone will stand before God it is reasonable to suggest that at this post-mortem encounter all will be able to confess Christ as Lord. He does recognize that “scriptural evidence is not abundant” for his thesis of a post-mortem experience, but suggests that this “scantiness is relativized by the strength of the theological argument or it. A post-mortem encounter with Jesus actually makes very good sense” (1992: 169).

not a problem within Mormonism with the belief being based on Latter-day scripture (D&C 138) that enables the hermeneutic of hopefulness to be read into the Bible passages. Latter-day Saints believe that, with the aid of a living prophet, they are able to expand this doctrine and make it coherent with teachings about judgement and eschatology. Latter-day Saints believe that Joseph F. Smith (the sixth President of the Church) received a revelation while studying about Christ's time in the spirit world. There, Latter-day Saints believe, the righteous who had passed away prior to Christ's death were gathered together, and it is to them whom Jesus taught the fulness of his Gospel.²⁵⁴ Christ then organized the righteous to go to the spirits that were in the Prison part of the spirit world and teach them this same Gospel. The presentation of the Gospel would be on the same conditions as those who had it presented to them in this life "that [those in the spirit world] might be judged according to men in the flesh" (see D&C 138: 11-13, 18-20, 22, 30-34, 36-37, 57). While the sphere of existence of may be different, it is important for Latter-day Saint belief, that all people will have the opportunity to "accept or reject the Gospel and work out their salvation in circumstances that the wisdom of heaven holds as equal" (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 57). Just as Latter-day Saints believe that the Gospel is presented in the same way, and on the same conditions, as during mortality an associated belief is the continuation of a person's character. Latter-day Saints teach that the spirit that possesses a person's body at death and the personality and inclinations they have will continue into the spirit world (see Alma 34: 32-34). If a person would have accepted the Gospel during mortality, Latter-day Saints believe that, they will accept it in the spirit world. Latter-day Saints believe that this preaching was not limited to the immediate period following Christ's visit, rather that the work of evangelization will

²⁵⁴ Although the Biblical passages refer to Christ visiting prison, this revelation makes it clear to Latter-day Saints that it was to the paradise part of heaven that Christ visited. These spirits could legitimately be seen to be in prison because they were still unable to overcome death, and so were trapped in a prison without a body.

continue until judgement day so that all will be able to hear the message and be judged accordingly.²⁵⁵

Returning to the conditions of those within the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms within Latter-day Saint theology, the possibility of receiving the offer of exaltation after death is not available to certain people. For those who rejected the Gospel in its fulness while in mortality, but accepted it in the spirit world there is the possibility of a terrestrial glory (D&C 76:74). However, the overall implications of a post-mortem evangelization suggest a more positive approach to eschatology than in the classical description giving a variety of outcomes that make sense of this life.

Latter-day Saint belief has some parallels with aspects of Christian universalism. Various aspects of these universalisms will aid in the unpacking of Latter-day Saint eschatology. In Hick's exploration of the afterlife he posits:

If, then God's purpose of the perfecting of human beings is ever to be fulfilled, it must either be brought to an instantaneous completion by divine fiat, perhaps at the moment of death, or else take place through a continued development within some further environment in which God places us (1985: 347).

This links with Kantzer who expresses the hope "that God is too loving, too kind, and too generous to condemn any soul to eternal punishment. I would like to believe that hell can only be the anteroom to heaven, a temporary and frightful discipline to bring the unregenerate to final moral perfection" (Kantzer, 1987: 45).

²⁵⁵ This teaching is extended in the Latter-day Saint belief that those in spirit prison will be taught by others of their own dispensation (time), in their own language and, in a number of cases, their own family (Millet and McConkie, 1986: 54-57).

Hick argues that the traditional objection to universalism that “sinners” escape punishment can be overcome with a belief in a period of suffering.

If, then, we assume that such sufferings are not eternal and hence morally pointless, but rather temporal and redemptive in purpose, we are led to postulate an existence or existences beyond the grave in which the moral structure of reality is borne in upon the individual, and in which his self-centredness is gradually broken through by a “godly sorrow” that represents the inbreaking of reality (1985: 346).

Suggesting that Hick’s arguments have some resonance for Latter-day Saints would also help identify some of the concerns of justice and theodicy that might be faced by such an eschatology. The eventual salvation of all is rejected by exclusivists and inclusivists alike. Strange (2002) and Sanders (1993) suggest that such approaches are not Christian and do not recognize the depth and seriousness of sin. “Hick’s universalism is not obviously compatible with Christian theology in that it achieves its end only by pushing Christ and his atonement to the periphery as merely one route to salvation” (Parry and Partridge, 2003: xvii). Latter-day Saint eschatology does not seem to face these two concerns: Christ remains central to any post-mortem experience; all will confess him as Lord at judgement. In suggesting that there is a disparity in rewarding all, Latter-day Saints have a belief in gradations of reward which ensures that it is not “all the same in the end” (Jones, 1950: 29).²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ This teaching of the justice of God is highlighted in the *Book of Mormon*:

And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day (Alma 14:10-11).

The reception of truth within the spirit world can be seen to be the continuation of a person's reception of truth through general revelation and the light of Christ. A person would not change from rejecting all facets of truth to suddenly being willing to receive it in the spirit world. This has important implications for the preconditions of a theology of religions in suggesting a more positive eschatological view of non-Latter-day Saint religions. Insofar as a religion could be seen to be a reflection of aspects of light of Christ, it might, therefore, better prepare its adherents to receive the Gospel in the spirit world. This possible preparatory role that truth, within the light of Christ, serves for the reception of the Gospel in the spirit world is reflective of the beliefs explored in chapter 3 that people's faith is fulfilled when they join the Church.²⁵⁷ It is similarly reflective of a continuum of knowledge and light that is fulfilled through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as understood in Mormonism. For a theology of religions to be constructed the role that a person's religion might play in this continuum will need to be explored.²⁵⁸ A person following a religion, as opposed to a lack of religious belief, might provide a more hopeful Latter-day Saint theology of religions.

Post-mortem evangelization provides a more hopeful reading of eschatology that could be seen to be a move towards inclusivity as reflected in the writings and classification of Pannenberg (1972) and Pinnock (1992). Inclusivity is suggested as post-mortem evangelization extends the presentation of the good news of Christ to all of the people who have ever lived, or who will ever live on the earth. This belief reflects the love of God that in the classical view seemed to be negated slightly through the opportunities to hear the Gospel by birth and circumstance.²⁵⁹ Although post-mortem evangelization, and the teaching about the spirit world,

The sufferings of this life are thus rewarded and punished initially in the spirit world, and then into the level of reward in the judgement.

²⁵⁷ This will be explored in greater detail in the implications section of this chapter (4.4).

²⁵⁸ See sections 5.2 and 5.3.

²⁵⁹ Elucidated in the first section of this chapter (4.2).

expands the scope of potential exaltation it nonetheless retains the celestial exclusivity prevalent in a Latter-day Saint eschatology; in that the message that has to be fully accepted is the Gospel of Jesus Christ taught within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In examining the qualifications for the celestial kingdom there still remains the issue of the acceptance of ordinances which are necessary for exaltation.²⁶⁰ While a person may be able to accept the Gospel in the spirit world there is no caveat that would exempt people from the necessity of baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and being sealed for eternity.

4.3b The Reception of Ordinances

The acceptance of Christ, and his Gospel, in response to post-mortem evangelization does not negate the necessity of adherence to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel. In the exploration of the importance and nature of ordinances, in both the pneumatology chapter of this work and in the classical Mormon eschatology section, it is evident that only those who have undergone these ordinances can hope for exaltation.²⁶¹ That it is possible for the dead to receive these ordinances is evident from the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God, And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation (D&C 138: 58-59).

This scripture suggests, for Latter-day Saints, that those who accept the Gospel post-mortally people will need to suffer through repentance. However, by activating the atonement in their

²⁶⁰ See sections 3.2c and d.

²⁶¹ The ordinances being baptism; confirmation; reception of the priesthood (for men); iniatories; endowment and sealing of a marriage.

lives they are removed from prison and taken into paradise. There is still a need for all to be obedient to the ordinances of the Temple identified, but that there is a way for this to be achieved is evident this conclusion being included in the passage.²⁶²

Latter-day Saints extend the availability of the ordinances necessary for exaltation to all humanity through vicarious ordinances. On 15 August 1840 Simon Baker recorded the first instance of Joseph Smith teaching the principle of baptism for the dead:

I was present at a discourse that the prophet Joseph delivered on baptism for the dead 15 August 1840. He read the greater part of the 15th chapter of Corinthians and remarked that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought glad tidings of great joy. ... He also said the apostle [Paul] was talking to a people who understood baptism for the dead, for it was practiced among them. He went on to say that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God. He went on and made a very beautiful discourse (Ehat and Cook, 1983: 49).²⁶³

Latter-day Saints believe that baptism is crucial to exaltation, as an expression of faith in Jesus Christ, and as a channel for the atonement of Christ. The importance of vicarious baptism, therefore, necessitates a Temple to be built. In Temples, proxy baptisms can be performed on behalf of family members who have passed away without receiving that ordinance themselves. This, then, extends to all the ordinances outlined earlier, which can only be carried out by Latter-

²⁶² This is an area of some question within existing inclusivist eschatologies: if a person (or denomination) teaches that baptism (as an exemplar ordinance) is necessary for salvation how is it possible that any person except those so baptized will be anything but damned?

²⁶³ Latter-day Saints do see this practice as being taught within the Bible (1 Cor 15: 23); but rely on the further revelations recorded by Joseph Smith (and Joseph F. Smith) as a basis for the doctrine.

day Saints within the Temples.²⁶⁴ The proxy nature of these ordinances and the acceptance of them by the dead are explained by McConkie and Ostler:

The priesthood can be used to perform the ordinances of [exaltation] for those who have passed from this life without the opportunity to receive them. In so doing priesthood bearers act upon the same principle as that governing the atonement of Christ. So it is that in the performance of vicarious ordinances we do for others that which they were unable to do for themselves. Thus we can stand in the stead of those who died without the opportunity to be baptized in the performance of that sacred ordinance and make that covenant in their behalf. It then becomes their right to accept or reject that which was done in their behalf (2000: 972).

In performing the ordinances of the Temple for their deceased family, Latter-day Saints teach that, these ordinances are not being forced upon those who have passed away. In Latter-day Saint belief, the ordinance has been performed but it is up to the individual (as it is in this life) whether they accept or reject it. If they do not accept the Gospel in the spirit world then those ordinances are of no efficacy.²⁶⁵ However, on acceptance of the Gospel, and receipt of these ordinances the spirit of the person will move from prison to paradise if they meet the requirements of righteousness. In paradise these people will then participate in the preaching of the Gospel to those in prison.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ For a short period of time in the 1840s certain ordinances were performed outside of the Temple. Latter-day Saints believe this was a short term measure while there was no Temple. This practice stopped following a revelation given to Joseph Smith (see Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 4: 426).

²⁶⁵ It is some of these who “without the law” refers to earlier; they live moral lives but remain eternally without the law.

²⁶⁶ The transformation from prison to paradise, in Latter-day Saint teaching, is either a mental and spiritual one, or it could be a geographic move depending on the interpretation of the nature of the separation in the spirit world. For example McConkie and Millet argue that the spirit world is one community, similar to this life where all the spirits “live and move and have their being in one and the same realm” (1986: 17). Whereas Bruce R. McConkie argues:

Latter-day Saints believe that ordinances will be offered to all, hence their emphasis on family history work. There will be some (possibly a very large number), however, who will not have the opportunity to have this Temple work completed before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For Latter-day Saints when this Parousia occurs it will usher in the Millennium where Christ will reign and it is during this thousand years that all the Temple work will be completed for all of the human family (see Pixton, 1992: 907-8).

For Latter-day Saints, the extension of ordinances to those who have died without receiving them during mortality presents a positive and hopeful eschatology.²⁶⁷ It also maintains an emphasis on explicit confession of Christ and adherence to his ordinances as found within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For Latter-day Saints no person is denied the opportunity of receiving the ordinances of exaltation. This process also involves individual Latter-day Saints in the sealing and exaltation of their families as “the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers” (D&C 2: 3; see also Malachi 4: 5–6; D&C 27: 9; 110: 13–16; and 128: 18), ensuring that judgement is not a day of devastation. Without this vicarious work Latter-day Saints believe that “the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” (D&C 2:4); i.e. the majority of humanity would be lost. The hope evident in the Latter-day Saint belief of a universal salvation is extended to a universal offer of exaltation. However, this hope is balanced

In the realm of departed spirits there are two divisions— paradise, where the spirits of the righteous go to await the day when they shall come forth in the Resurrection of the just; and hell, where the spirits of the wicked go to be buffeted and tormented until that day when they shall come forth in the Resurrection of the unjust (McConkie B. 1973: 309; see also Kimball H. C., 1855).

Thus, paradise and prison are either states of mind or physical places. The more convincing argument is of a physical division in light of 1 Nephi 15: 28-30 and *Gospel Principles* which teaches that “The righteous and the wicked are separated” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009: 243). This suggests that “when the wicked spirits repent, they leave their prison hell and join the righteous in paradise” (McConkie B. 1979: 762). In the end, however, whichever interpretation is taken the end result of a movement from prison to paradise is the same.

²⁶⁷ The role of a religion, rather than a secular world view, as contributing to this fulfilment will need to be explored further in sections 5.2 and 5.3.

with the ecclesiological exclusivity being maintained as the ordinances are only available within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The implications of the juxtaposition of hope and particularity will need to be addressed to enable the construction of a theology of religions.²⁶⁸

The post-mortem evangelization and vicarious Temple work overcome the barriers to exaltation, of explicit confession of Christ and the reception of ordinances to exaltation, that were highlighted in the classical eschatology. However, one further barrier remains: the necessity of keeping the commandments. Although belief in Christ and obedience to ordinances open the way to exaltation, the reward is ultimately given as a reward for works performed in this life.²⁶⁹

4.3c Judgement

Within Latter-day Saint eschatology, people are assigned to a kingdom of glory based on the works performed in mortality, more specifically on their response to the commandments of God.²⁷⁰ In light of this, and the belief that “the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labours” after which “there can be no labour performed” (Alma 34:32-33), how can a person who has lived “without the law” be expected to receive the standard necessary for exaltation? It is on this point that Latter-day Saints see a person’s religion and beliefs begin to have an influence on their afterlife. Smith suggests a “wise Lawgiver” who judges people on the deeds they perform, rather than those they were unable to fulfil.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ These implications will be explored in the final section of this chapter (4.4).

²⁶⁹ See section 4.2d.

²⁷⁰ As indicated in section 4.2.

²⁷¹ This does not take away the existence of “sins of omission” (Faust, 1997), but only relates to those commandments people were unable to keep because of ignorance.

But while one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes “His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”. He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,” or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. He will judge them, “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law. We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right (Smith, J, 1980 [1902], vol 4: 595-6).

Latter-day Saints believe that all will be judged by this “wise Lawgiver” according to the light they received in this life, “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have”, which reiterates the point that all people receive the light of Christ.²⁷² This is not to suggest that the light of Christ is sufficient to save, only that living a life in accordance with it is an indication of how well a person would have lived the Gospel. It is on this basis that a person is assigned to a kingdom of glory. Not all of those who accept the Gospel after this life will

²⁷² See section 3.3b.

inherit the celestial kingdom, only those who meet the initial requirements set out in Doctrine and Covenants 76.²⁷³

The importance of what law people receive as a basis for judgement raises the importance of the light of Christ in a person's life, and in their worldview. While being insufficient to save, the light of Christ is seen to provide a basis for judgement, and assignation to a degree of glory. For non-Mormons the motivating nature of the light of Christ for actions could suggest a similar role to the Holy Ghost for Latter-day Saints. Responding positively to the light of Christ could be evidence of the grace of Christ active in a person's life.²⁷⁴ In a classical Mormon pneumatology the actions a person performs are an indication of a person's reception of grace and their resultant conversion and sanctification. Mormon theology teaches that it is not the works that produces grace and Spirit but the opposite. These teachings about a person's actions being evidence of the grace of Christ raise important implications for a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. As a person evidences their reception of the Holy Ghost, and the light and grace of Christ active in their lives, through their actions then it is possible to posit that non-Latter-day Saints are being made a "new creature" in Christ.²⁷⁵ The possibility that other religions might help a person respond to the light of Christ, in the truths that the religion teaches, suggests the possibility of a more hopeful view of other religions.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Those who accept the Gospel in the Spirit world after rejecting it in mortality will receive the terrestrial kingdom (see D&C 76: 74).

²⁷⁴ This is not without precedent in contemporary Christian pneumatologies. Pinnòck suggests: "The Spirit helps us, but we are also co-workers with God (2 Cor 6:1; Phil 1: 9). We work out our salvation, while God is at work in us (Phil 2: 12-13). In conversion there is an interplay of grace and assent (1996: 158). Similarly Moltmann (2001) and Comblin (1989) see in the work of liberation theology the movement of the Spirit to action in the world. All of these pneumatologies, however, stop short of suggesting that these works will condemn or save us— it is only the grace of Christ that can do that.

²⁷⁵ See section 3.2c (iv).

²⁷⁶ This area of Latter-day Saint eschatology needs further unpacking to construct a theology of religions (4.4).

Smith's view of a "wise Lawgiver" who judges people's actions according to the light they receive, enhances the importance of mortality for people who do not hear of Christ while alive. Smith affirms that all men will be judged according to how they responded in the flesh to whatever law they had access. This law will then play a significant factor in their judgement. What Smith's position makes clear is that all men will hear the Gospel and have access to its saving ordinances; thus, as Peter says, they will be able to be "judged according to the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet 4: 6). The light of Christ and the reception of ordinances combine a hopeful eschatology with an embrative plan for all to be judged according to the same standard.²⁷⁷ The judgement of works, according to the light received, raises important implications for the construction of a theology of religions. If other religions have elements of truth,²⁷⁸ and evidence the light of Christ, then it is possible that religion's code of morality provides the framework against which their adherents will be judged. If this is so, being religious may be more desirable than not, and if other religions contain "light" they could, therefore, be helpful mechanisms on the way to exaltation. The constructive Mormon beliefs about judgement suggest that how a person lives their own religion will affect their kingdom of glory.²⁷⁹

The tension between the more hopeful view of other religions as manifestations of the light of Christ and general revelation, and the more negative view of other religions wherein they

²⁷⁷ Whether it can be said to be the 'same' standard when the ethical standard differs for all is a moot point for Latter-day Saints when considered alongside the parable of the vineyard (Matt 20: 1-16). In this all receive the same reward if they worked according to the time given to them.

²⁷⁸ See section 3.3a.

²⁷⁹ Similar questions remain about the missiological imperative that may disappear with an exaltation that is available to all by "living a good life": if everyone will eventually attain salvation, then there is no motivation to preach the Gospel or to pray for the conversion of those who do not yet know Christ" (Beougher, 1998: 14). This will need further exploration in the construction of a theology of religions (see chapter 5, especially section 5.2).

blind honest truth seekers by “the subtle craftiness of men” (D&C 123:12) remains and will need to be addressed in a construction of a theology of religions.²⁸⁰

4.3d Exceptions²⁸¹

In examining the necessity of ordinances and the judgement on the basis of works it becomes apparent that, in the Latter-day Saint eschatology developed thus far, there is a gap in the theology of hope that seems to be being developed. Does a person who lived before Christ have to adhere to the same ordinances that he implemented? It may seem at this point that the work is creating “straw men” in order to provide answers from a Latter-day Saint perspective. However, in examining mainstream theology of religions this is an element, as it impacts on

²⁸⁰ The two positions exist but there has not been an attempt to harmonize them both, or debunk one or the other. It is to this task that this work will return in the final chapter of this work.

²⁸¹ There are two further seeming exceptions that are in place with regard to a celestial inheritance that are not explored in this section. Firstly, those who receive a relational salvation (not exaltation) in the celestial kingdom:

...the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. ... They will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God (Whitney, 1929: 110).

Secondly, those who never marry through no fault of their own whose reward is exaltation:

There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive” (Snow, 1996: 138).

These will not be explored fully in this work as they do not impinge on the value or efficacy of other faiths. Both of these are only prescient for faithful Latter-day Saints (and those who could be so considered post mortally).

eschatology, that needs to be fully explored to offer both a full eschatology and also to lay the basis for a theology of religions (Pinnock, 1992; Rahner, 1999; Kraemar, 1938).

4.3d (i) Those before Christ

The question of the conditions of salvation for those who lived before Christ, with a specific focus on Israelite religion, is a crucial discussion to enable a theology of religions to be constructed. The issue for those holding an exclusivist position is that, if Christ is the only way to salvation then, pre-Christian religion and the “the revelation of God in Israel’s history was either (a) not revelation after all, or (b) a revelation, but somehow inadequate for salvation” (Kraemer, 1938: 66). If, however, those within pre-Christian Israel receive exaltation according to their response to God’s “incomplete” revelation, this could suggest that those with further “incomplete” revelations in the religions of the world could receive a similar exemption from the necessity of “complete” belief. This would have important implications for theology of religions as other religions could be seen to be such incomplete revelations.²⁸² The boundaries of pre-Christian salvation history are extended further in theology of religions with a discussion of certain people outside of Israel (Pinnock 1992; Rahner, 1999). Rahner uses the examples of what he calls a “God pleasing pagan” (1999: 294), who God inspires in the building of their religions. This idea is reflected in Pinnock’s “holy pagans”; Pinnock elucidates on the lives of these individuals and how they illustrate the mercy and grace of God in dealing with those outside of the House of Israel (1992: 30).²⁸³ With no evidence for the eternal destiny of such people and

²⁸² The term “incomplete” with regard to Israelite religion suggests religion without the full revelation of Christ.

²⁸³ Pinnock lists and expounds upon the lives of many including Job, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Daniel, Abram, Melchizedek (Genesis 14), Abimelech, King of Gerar (Gen 20), Jethro (Exodus 18), Balaam (Numbers 22), (1992: 26-27), he also attributes the possibility of Jesus’ reference to pagan saints, in that he “referred to a pagan saint known as the queen of Sheba... (Matt 12: 42). The queen was a stranger to God’s revelation to Israel, a pagan woman from Sheba, and in search of God’s wisdom (2 Ch 9: 1-12). Obviously God did not leave her without witness, and she responded favourably to it” (Pinnock, 1992: 27). It is undeniable for Pinnock that God is involved and interested in the salvation and history of peoples outside of the Israelite covenant relationship. Pinnock further mentions the actions of God in relation to Jonah and

nations Strange has noted that the debate is moot: “Any statements made by Pinnock and his critics... would appear to belong to the realms of speculation and deduction” (2002: 180). In extending Latter-day Saint eschatology and its implications for a theology of religions it is necessary to explore these nuances of existing typologies.

From the discussion in this work thus far, it may seem that the Latter-day Saint answer to the question with regard to pre-Christian religion and salvation is the same as other incomplete revelations. That those religious practices and beliefs serve to prepare people to a full acceptance of Christ and his Gospel post-mortem. People who lived prior to Christ would similarly be subject to the same ordinances in the Temple performed by their descendants. This answer only goes so far in responding to the question about the place of pre-Christian religion in a theology of religions. In a Latter-day Saint christology it was noted that Christ was from the beginning and is the God of the Old Testament, and it is against this background that Latter-day Saint teaching needs to be explored. This exploration is developed consciously within the parameters of a Latter-day Saint belief that there is no time that can be properly termed pre-Christian. Latter-day Saints believe that the Restoration through Joseph Smith did not just restore the Church established in first century Palestine, but knowledge and priesthood that were evident from the beginning of the world. McConkie has highlighted the “eternal” nature of true Christianity in his description of what, for him, is wrongly termed the pre-Christian era:

True and heaven-sent worship has been found on earth from the day of the first man to the present moment whenever and wherever men have been willing to hearken to their Maker. Christianity did not originate in the so-called Christian era. Our Lord did not

the Ninevites who he is willing to accept “just as penitent Ninevites” showing that God is involved not just in the lives of individuals outside of Israel, but also in the lives of nations (1992: 28).

bring it for the first time when he came to dwell on earth. Pure religion and approved worship have been with is from the beginning (McConkie, B. 1981: 50).

The existence of “Christianity” on the earth, for Latter-day Saints, began with Adam. All the prophets of the Old Testament “believed in Christ and worshipped the Father in his name” (Jacob 4:5).²⁸⁴ If Adam is taken as an example, it is evident from Latter-day Saint scripture that he knew of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the necessity of ordinances:

And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was. Amen (Moses 5: 58-59).²⁸⁵

Latter-day Saints believe that Adam and Eve’s marriage is celestial, Eyring suggests that it can be properly termed eternal because it “was performed by God when Adam and Eve were immortal” (Eyring, H. B. 1998: 66);²⁸⁶ consequently their marriage was according to eternal covenants (see Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 2: 71). Latter-day Saints believe that

²⁸⁴ Latter-day Saints, while having no official Church position on evolution, do have a strong belief in the origin of humanity. As such Latter-day Saints teach that Adam was the first man upon the earth:

It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men. The word of the Lord declared that Adam was “the first man of all men” (Moses 1:34), and we are therefore in duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race. It was shown to the brother of Jared that all men were created in the *beginning* after the image of God; whether we take this to mean the spirit or the body, or both, it commits us to the same conclusion: Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our Heavenly Father (Smith, Winder, & Lund, 2002: 30).

²⁸⁵ For further references to Adam and his knowledge of Jesus Christ see Moses 5 (knowledge of the Holy Ghost, the atonement, the necessity of faith and repentance); and Moses 6 (the importance of baptism, Adam’s own baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost).

²⁸⁶ There are different writers in Latter-day Saint works with the name Henry Eyring. The member of the First Presidency is known as Henry B. Eyring.

this knowledge of Christ and his ordinances continued through the generations and included people such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Thus, all people are judged according to the same conditions throughout the ages. This, for Latter-day Saints, also provides coherence with the ability of Christ to preach to the spirits in paradise between his death and Resurrection. Without the eternal nature of his Gospel and his ordinances there would have been none found within spirit paradise because their knowledge of Christ would have been insufficient. It would have not yet been fulfilled.

With regard to holy pagans, prior to Christ's mortal life, this phrase is used to suggest those who are outside of the covenant with God. For Pinnock, people such as Melchizedek (see Genesis 14) are used as an example that God is involved with, and interested in, the salvation and history of peoples outside of the Israelite covenant relationship. Latter-day Saint teaching does not have "holy pagans" because people such as Melchizedek are seen to be within the covenantal relationship. Melchizedek is not a pagan, within Latter-day Saint teaching, but a prophet who preached about Christ and held the priesthood:

But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention (Alma 13: 18-19; see also D&C 84: 14).

This takes away the "hope" present in some inclusivist theologies of religion (notably Rahner and Pinnock) that some people receive salvation without explicit knowledge of Christ and

outside the covenantal relationship of Israel, or latterly of Christ's Church.²⁸⁷ The existence of the fulness of the Gospel is continued, but with some qualification, in an examination of the period of time between Moses and Christ.

While Latter-day Saints believe "that the doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ were taught and practiced in the time frame of the Old Testament"²⁸⁸ (Ogden et al, 2009: viii) they also believe that, for the majority of the people of Israel, the fulness was removed from the earth and replaced by the law of Moses. The giving of the law of Moses is important for this thesis as it shows an "incomplete" revelation as coming from God. As such, it may be possible to suggest that adherence to the law might provide opportunities to receive exaltation. If this is so for the law of Moses it may have implications for other "incomplete" revelations.

In Latter-day Saint belief, the fulness of the Gospel was rejected by Israel when Moses was at Mount Sinai. During the Sinai experience:

...the Lord revealed the fulness of the everlasting Gospel to Moses, and... [he] sought diligently to persuade his Israelitish brethren to believe its truths and live its laws. They refused. They hardened their hearts and chose to walk in carnal paths. The eternal

²⁸⁷ Davies (2010) argues that the typology of Mormon self-identity began as Mormon Israel, and only latterly developed into a Church.

²⁸⁸ In further detail some of the doctrines believed to be outlined in the Old Testament era are:

[T]he first principles and ordinances of the Gospel; the pillars of the Creation, Fall and Atonement; the ordinance of celestial marriage and subsequent importance of children, posterity, and family history work; the covenant and the mission of holy and chosen people; the sacrament; tithes and offerings; patriarchs and patriarchal blessings; names and titles of God, Jehovah, Jesus Christ; the appearance of God and angels; the role of prophets and prophecies; revelation, dreams and visions; premortal life; the spirit world; worship practices; record keeping; miracles; observance of holy days, and Sabbaths; priesthood functions and administrations; Temples and Temple worship; clothing and sealing power; laws of health; scattering and gathering of Israel; apostasy and restoration; missionary work, or raising the warning voice to individuals and nations; human deification(*theosis*, or the doctrine of humans' potential to become like Heavenly Father); signs of the last days; the Second Coming; the Millennium; and Zion. All these things were known and taught in Old Testament times (Ogden, Muhlestein, Ludlow, & Valletta, 2009: viii-ix).

fulness was more than they could bear. As a consequence, God in his mercy—lest they be damned for rejecting that which they could not live, and as a means for preparing them and their seed for the higher standards which all saved beings must eventually live—the Lord in his mercy gave them the law of Moses. It did not replace the Gospel, which had been offered to them in the first instance; rather, it was added to the more perfect system, for as we shall see, there were times when the ancient and chosen seed had both the fulness of the Gospel and the preparatory Gospel, when they had all of the saving truths and yet kept the terms and conditions of the law of Moses (McConkie, B. 1981: 405-6; see also Hebrews 7:11–12, 19–22; D&C 84:24–25; Sitati, 2009).²⁸⁹

This giving of the law of Moses suggests that God, for Latter-day Saints, accepts a person living a lesser law in order for a person to have a greater chance of a more hopeful judgement. Had the people of Israel been presented with the fulness of the Gospel, they would have been damned because of their inability to follow it. To prepare them to receive the “fulness” a lesser law was implemented. This lesser law has echoes of the statements of Whitney and Cannon regarding the inspiration of Muhammad.²⁹⁰ The existence of a divinely inspired lesser law suggests that if religions, and their laws, are inspired by the light of Christ then those belief structures are given for the same reasons as the Mosaic law: to prepare people to receive the fulness, and to enable a more hopeful judgement. As such, other religions provide, for Latter-day Saints, evidence of a

²⁸⁹ Smith taught that the references to those who had the full Gospel and practised the preparatory law of Moses refer to all of the prophets in the Old Testament:

Some say the kingdom of God was not set up on the earth until the day of Pentecost, and that John [the Baptist] did not preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But I say, in the name of the Lord, that the kingdom of God was set up on the earth from the days of Adam to the present time, whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name (Smith, J. 1938: 71; see also Jacob 4: 5).

Also included are the Nephites in the *Book of Mormon* (see for example Mosiah 4: 6-8; 2 Ne. 5:10; Jarom 1:5; Mosiah 2:3).

²⁹⁰ See section 3.3b (ii).

loving God who wishes to give all the opportunity to receive exaltation. If this is so, there are important implications for the missiological imperative evident in Latter-day Saint practice, and thence for a theology of religions.²⁹¹

Latter-day Saints believe that the law of Moses did not, however, automatically remove all knowledge of Christ from the covenantal relationship with Israel. Within Latter-day Saint belief the purpose of the law of Moses is preparatory and is designed to point people towards Christ: “And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal” (Alma 34: 14; see also Mosiah 13: 31; Mosiah 16:14; Jacob 4:5). All the tokens, rituals and rules of the Mosaic law were designed in such a way to point to the life and sacrifice of the Saviour Jesus Christ. From this perspective, Latter-day Saints believe that, the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a continuation of a person’s adherence to the law of Moses. Again, this is suggestive of a continuum of knowledge. It should, however, be noted that the law was given completely by God, which is not be the case for other religions, and as such its adherents may be better prepared than those of other religions whose law contains only a partiality of truth. McConkie outlines a hierarchy of systems of belief that illustrates this point: at the bottom are those “who rebel against light and decency” represented in the beliefs of the world in “sex-centred worship of Ashtoreth, and the witchcraft, necromancy, astrology, and outright Satan worship”. Above this group are those who “heed the voice of conscience” in promoting decency; “Such are the ideals at least of the great religions of the world—Christian, Jewish, Islam, Buddhism... or what have you”. Interestingly, in the same group as the religions of the world, he goes on to list groups such as temperance societies which suggests that it is the standards of decency, rather than the light of Christ or movement towards God, that ennoble this group. The second highest group are those who “have the preparatory Gospel— the law of Moses”. In

²⁹¹ These questions will need to be returned to the final section of this chapter (4.4).

McConkie's view the law of Moses is a "higher and better system of worship than modern Catholic and sectarian Christianity, to say nothing of the fact that it surpassed [Islam], Buddhism, and all other forms of worship" (McConkie B. 1981a: 69-71). McConkie sees the law of Moses as providing the initial steps on the path to exaltation. His view of other religions seems at odds with the views elucidated earlier when discussing certain people from their history and their limited inspiration. Although the law of Moses could be seen to be fully inspired, and when lived to its fulness would lead a person to Christ, it could also be argued that living the inspired parts of other religions could serve a similar purpose. This tension between a hopeful view of other religion and a more condemnatory view, which places them alongside temperance societies with nothing to set them apart, has been identified earlier and needs to be explored in greater detail to construct a theology of religions.²⁹²

The law of Moses provides the perfect example, for Latter-day Saints, of how a person who lives their life on this earth, according to the light they have received, will continue into the post mortal world. In the spirit prison a person will receive or reject the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the same way as they received or rejected the practice of the laws of Moses. Latter-day Saints believe that it is not the law that saves, rather a person is able to receive exaltation when that law is fulfilled in the atonement, and Church, of Jesus Christ:

Doth salvation come by the law of Moses? What say ye? And they answered and said that salvation did come by the law of Moses. But now Abinadi said unto them: I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai, And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his

²⁹² As such will be returned to in the final section of this chapter (4.4).

people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses (Mosiah 12: 31-33; 13:28 see also Acts 13:39; Gal 3: 24; D&C 22:2).

In Mormon theology it is Christ that exalts; a person who keeps the law of Moses with exactness will need their knowledge fulfilling, and ordinances completing.²⁹³ Within a Latter-day Saint eschatology a discussion of those who lived prior to Christ's mortal life adds nothing to the teachings already outlined. A person is exalted insofar as they live according to the knowledge they have, and accept the knowledge and ordinances of Christ made available to them in the post-mortal world. It does, however, raise important implications and questions for a theology of religions.

4.3e Conclusion

The full exploration of Latter-day Saint eschatology provides a more hopeful theology with regard to the salvation of those of other religions. The classical description highlighted that salvation was a gift of Christ given to all but the smallest number of humans. There did remain, however, a stringent exclusivism concerning exaltation (full salvation). Exaltation was only available to the innocent and those people who had confessed Christ, received the ordinances of the Church, and lived their lives according to those covenants and ordinances. While maintaining the christological, pneumatological and ecclesiological exclusivism inherent throughout this work, the constructive Mormon eschatology provides the possibility of exaltation to those outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on this earth. This possibility is given as a person's mortal experience is ameliorated in the spirit world with the

²⁹³ Latter-day Saints believe that some, such as the righteous Nephites in the *Book of Mormon*, received of the ordinances of Christ during mortality because of their reception of the fulness of the Gospel (see McConkie B. 1981: 405-6). This is evidenced in the *Doctrine and Covenants* where Joseph F. Smith recorded that when the Saviour preached to the spirits in paradise he did so to a "vast multitude" (D&C 138: 18) which included Adam; Eve; Abel; Seth; Noah; Shem; Abraham; Isaac; Jacob; Moses; Isaiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Elias; Malachi; Elijah "and many more, even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God" (D&C 138: 38-49).

“fulness of the Gospel” and its ordinances being offered to them. Only as a person accepts Christ, receives of the ordinances vicariously and accepts them, can the chance of exaltation be considered. It is at this point that a person’s religious beliefs can be seen to have positive or negative implications for the judgement. Latter-day Saints believe that a person will be judged according to how much “light” (of Christ) they received in this life: “Unto whom much is given, much is required” (D&C 82:3). Conversely, it could be argued that those who receive less knowledge in this life have less required of them. This has implications for a theology of religions especially as, the suggestion is that, elements of other religious traditions could be given by God for those unable to live the “higher” law during mortality.

4.4 Implications of a Mormon eschatology for a theology of religions

Within a Mormon eschatology there is a dialectical tension in a Latter-day Saint view of other religions that was also evident, to a degree, in christology, and to a larger extent within pneumatology. On the one hand, these religions are of no value and can be seen to lead people away from exaltation and, indeed, to the lowest degree of glory. The attempts that these religions undertake to come to know God through knowledge and practices are, at best, philosophies of men (Perry, 1996); and, at worst, the inspiration of the devil (2 Ne. 9: 9). The assignation of other religions to a meaningless position in Heavenly Father’s plan suggests that all non-Latter-day Saint religions are man-made. In his hierarchy of belief systems McConkie places religions of the world alongside humanistic organizations such as the temperance society. This view of religions as philosophies of men could be seen to be Barthian in nature;²⁹⁴ Barth suggests that only God can reveal God (see 1956: 307). In the revelation of Christ, God “replaces all the

²⁹⁴ At this point the work borrows from Barth to explore the nuances of Latter-day Saint belief; however, this is not to suggest that Barth would agree with the Latter-day Saint perspective.

different attempts of man to reconcile God to the world, all our human efforts at justification and sanctification, at conversion and salvation” (ibid: 308). All of the attempts of humankind to build a relationship especially a salvific relationship are wrong and an example of making images of God for themselves.²⁹⁵ The true image of God is that which God bestows upon people through the incarnation and anything else in opposition to this is wrong. “On the contrary, we lock the door against God, we alienate ourselves from Him, we come into direct opposition to him” (ibid: 309). It is this conclusion that leads Barth to the statement “that religion is unbelief” (ibid: 299). Latter-day Saints, on the basis of some of their teachings, could be led to the same conclusion.

The view of anything outside of Mormonism as the “Church of the devil” suggests a purposeful involvement of the devil in the religions of the world. The inclusion of truths could be seen, in a Latter-day Saint view, to be a counterfeiter’s tool to lead people away; the devil “has exerted a powerful influence upon mortal beings...in counterfeiting the true principles and ordinances of the Gospel” (Hunter, 1945: 40). In the end Latter-day Saints believe that only those with the fulness of truth will receive exaltation; as such reliance on partial truth will result in damnation. The assignation to the spirit prison may be only temporary in Latter-day Saint teaching; but the exclusion from exaltation is permanent. The active role that, Latter-day Saints believe, these religions play in keeping people from the reception of the fulness of the truth is taught in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it (D&C 123: 12).

²⁹⁵ Palmer (1997) suggests that the similarities in other religions could be from a number of sources other than the light of Christ (see below) or the devil. His suggestions include a suggestion that because Adam had the fulness of the Gospel, these teachings have been diluted but have survived through the ages. A second reason could be because of the common circumstances humans find themselves in that require a search for answers. Or that there are remembrances from the premortal existence.

In the sense that adherence to other religions keeps a person from receiving the further light of the Gospel, Latter-day Saints believe that other religions are a barrier to exaltation.

The other side of the dialectical tension suggests that other religions are seen to be helpful mechanisms toward the acceptance of the fulness of truth, and also the degree of glory received following judgement. If post-mortem evangelization is a continuation of a person's search for, and acquisition of, knowledge then that knowledge serves a crucial purpose. The *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches that knowledge is one of the most important things taken into the post-mortal worlds:

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the Resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come (D&C 130: 18-19). —

As such the knowledge of God available in the religions of the world serves a crucial role in the continuum of a person's existence. There seems to be a progression of knowledge that is eternal. Similarly, there is a hierarchy of truth revealed by the light of Christ within the religions of the world which, as truths are accepted lay the foundation for further truths to be received. That there is a hierarchy of truth, and religions, is evident from Latter-day Saint belief. This does not have to have the purely negative connotations outlined earlier. Bruce R. McConkie suggested:

It is better to a partial Christian than a non-Christian. It is better to believe some of the doctrines of Christ rather than none at all. One truth paves the way for another, and we all need to advance in knowledge and understanding" (McConkie, J. 2007: 181).

This continuum of knowledge is central to a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. Using McConkie's argument, about it being better to be a Christian than a non-Christian, it is possible

to suggest that certain truths enable a person to be closer to fulfilment in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What is being suggested is that having a knowledge of Christ and his role as the Son of God, places someone further along the continuum of knowledge than another person without such a belief. Latter-day Saints can see truths in other religions as evidence of the activity of the light of Christ. How a person responds to that light, both in terms of reception of further truth, but also in terms of works will enable progression towards exaltation to be a possibility. If a person lives according to the light they have received then they will have evidenced a willingness to abide by the level of the law which they have received. That this is acceptable in terms of an inheritance of exaltation, in Latter-day Saint teaching, is evidenced through the writings of Smith who suggested a “wise Lawgiver”, and also through the teachings with regard to the law of Moses as an acceptable “lower law”. To some degree, reception of truth and performance of works within these partially true systems of belief could be seen to be evidence, not just of the light of Christ, but also of the Holy Ghost and the grace of Christ. The *Book of Mormon* teaches “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moro. 10: 5); and as a prelude to accepting the fulness of the Gospel Latter-day Saints believe it is possible to feel the Holy Ghost testify of truth.²⁹⁶ This could, therefore, extend to wherever truth is taught, including other religions. The actions performed in response to the light of Christ are an evidence of how well that truth has been received. There is a caveat associated with the acceptance of truth in other religions: “the Father of lights does not desire His children to coast spiritually, to rest content with the light and truth they have” (Millet, 2007: 214-215). Thus, life continues to be a search for truth, which will have missiological implications for a theology of religions. If a person progresses “line upon line” it will be necessary in this life or the next for them to be offered the fulness of truth. If this fulness can only be found within the Church then members of that Church have a duty to enable all receive that fulfilment.

²⁹⁶ See section 3.2b.

In Latter-day Saint teaching both of these approaches to other religions are equally valid based on the evidence presented. On the one hand they serve as helpful mechanisms and evidence of God's love, on the other hand, they are hindrances to the acceptance of truth and tools of the devil. How, then, is a theology of religions to be constructed? The theology will need to be true to both sides of the debate; it will need to acknowledge the light and truths in other religions while recognizing the fulness of truth within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as necessary for exaltation. The theology will, similarly, need to acknowledge the falsity of other religions and their inadequacy for exaltation while recognizing them as preludes to the fulfilment of truth and the basis for judgement. It is to this task that this work now turns as the final chapter will strive to summarize the various threads into a Latter-day Saint theology of religions and from there suggest practical applications for engagement with other religions.

Chapter 5: Towards a Latter-day Saint theology of religions and its implications for engagement with other religions.

5.1 Introduction

In constructing a Latter-day Saint theology of religions a reminder of what is entailed in a traditional theology of religions will aid the first part of the task:

Theology of religions is that discipline of theological studies which attempts to account theologically for the meaning and value of other religions. Christian theology of religions attempt to think theologically about what it means to live with people of other faiths and about the relationship of Christianity to other religions (Karkainen, 2003:22).²⁹⁷

The construction of a theology of religions provides a focus for the first part of this chapter. The first question Karkainen identifies could be adapted to be: “What is the relationship of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to other religions?”²⁹⁸ As a study in theology, the task of the first section of this chapter is not to describe the inter-relationship of the Latter-day Saints and other religions on a social (or official level). Rather, theologically speaking, what is the Latter-day Saint view of other religions? Karkainen goes further in breaking down what this view would entail: “Is salvation to be found only in [Latter-day Saint] Christianity, and more specifically only in the Church? What is the lot of those who have not heard the [Latter-day

²⁹⁷ This is a short summary; a fuller explanation would be more nuanced but is not necessary at this point of the work.

²⁹⁸ These “other religions” to include both Christian and non-Christian religions as outlined in the introductory chapter to this thesis.

Saint] Christian message?... Is revelation only to be found in Christ, or are other religions revelatory, too?" (Karkainen, 2003:22). The previous chapters of this thesis have sought to answer these questions; in this section the various threads evident in Latter-day Saint christology, pneumatology and eschatology will be restated briefly and codified into a theology of religions. Central to this development of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions is a continuum of truth and knowledge; this will be a recurring theme that forms the basis of the bulk of this chapter.

The second part of this chapter will utilize the Latter-day Saint theology of religions, constructed in the first section of this chapter, to explore Mormon engagement with other religions. This will focus on the implications of the continuum for the motivations behind such engagement and, to some degree, the conduct of such engagement. The exact nature of engagement is left open to the various possibilities that exist. These could include working together on social and moral issues (see Kronish, 2010), participation in shared worship (McCarthy, 2007: 101), or reading scripture and resultant discussion (Adams, 2006). Why Latter-day Saints, individually and collectively, should engage with other religions is the focus of the final section. To this will be added some general principles for so doing, in whatever forum Latter-day Saints find themselves.

5.2 A Latter-day Saint theology of religions

5.2a A Linear Continuum

The plan of salvation, taught by Latter-day Saints, provides the various teachings that contribute to a theology of religions, and a metaphor for the answer of how Latter-day Saints view other religions. As outlined in the christology chapter the mortal experience is one stage in

a linear development that stretches backwards and forwards into eternity.²⁹⁹ Latter-day Saints believe that before this life there was a two stage existence. Firstly, existing without beginning all people were intelligences. God the Father then took of these intelligences and organized them into spirit bodies (Ballard, M.J.³⁰⁰ 1949; Kimball S. 1977).³⁰¹ These spirit bodies were given mortal bodies as they came to earth (Abraham 3:22-25).³⁰² Following death, in the judgement and the Resurrection, humanity progressed into immortal bodies such as that possessed by God.³⁰³ At all stages prior to exaltation Latter-day Saints believe humanity to be gods in embryo; everything in the plan of salvation (including the gaining of knowledge and mortal experience) is designed to prepare humanity for godhood.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ See chapter 2.2a (iv).

³⁰⁰ There are two leaders in Mormonism with the name M. Ballard, the middle initial is added to avoid confusion.

³⁰¹ As referred to in the christology chapter (2.2a) God the Father is on this continuum of existence. He too began from this pool of intelligences.

³⁰² One third of the spirits created rebelled and followed Satan, were cast out of heaven and restricted to their spirit bodies for eternity.

³⁰³ Only those in the celestial kingdom will have the same type of body as God. Latter-day Saints believe there are differences in the types of immortal bodies inherited in each kingdom of glory:

In the Resurrection there will be different kinds of bodies; they will not all be alike. The body a man receives will determine his place hereafter. There will be celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies, and telestial bodies, and these bodies will differ as distinctly as do bodies here ... Bodies will be quickened according to the kingdom which they are judged worthy to enter. Elder Orson Pratt many years ago in writing of the Resurrection and the kind of bodies which would be raised in these kingdoms said: "In every species of animals and plants, there are many resemblances in the general outlines and many specific differences characterizing the individuals of each species. So in the Resurrection. There will be several classes of resurrected bodies; some celestial, some terrestrial, some telestial, and some sons of perdition. Each of these classes will *differ* from the others by *prominent* and *marked distinctions*; yet, in each, considered by itself, there will be found many resemblances as well as distinctions. *There will be some physical peculiarity by which each individual in every class can be identified* (Smith, J. Fielding, 1999 [1954-1956], vol 2: 286-287).

³⁰⁴ This is taught in various places but is perhaps best summarized by Snow: "As man is now, God once was, as God is now man may be" (Snow, 1996: 1). Recent scholarship within some areas of Latter-day Saint writing have sought to relate this doctrine with earlier patristic writings on theosis and deification (Paulsen, 2006). The purpose of the current work is not to explore this relationship; only that Latter-day Saints see humanity as proceeding towards godhood. The use of the writings of the early Church Fathers

A Latter-day Saint theology of religions is a correlation to this linear development of existence. Aside from the belief that all humanity is on this continuum, Latter-day Saints see the pursuit of truth and exaltation as a developmental process. In the same way intelligences progress to spirits, to mortality, to Resurrection and godhood; so individual people progress in knowledge and experience in preparation for fulfilment in exaltation. The plan of salvation is about the accumulation of knowledge and truth: “[t]his provides an interesting perspective on eternal progression. There is apparently no end to learning and no end of things to learn” (Eyring H. 1967: 157).³⁰⁵ It is the contention of this thesis that Latter-day Saints see other religions as somewhere on the continuum to fulfilment in Mormonism. Hence, all people can be seen to be embryonic Mormons.

The term “embryonic Mormon” utilizes the paradigm of the historical and theological fulfilment of Judaism by Christianity and expands it exponentially.³⁰⁶ The same continuum theology with regard to faith and knowledge development is evident in the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism:

It is true that he [Paul] regards Israel still under the law as in the position of a child, not yet sufficiently mature to enter into its heritage as a son (Gal 4: 1-7), but he regards believers too as still in a process of growth and transformation (2:19-20; 4:19), themselves not yet entered into their full heritage (5: 21). So the picture is more one of a

raises important questions about truth in “apostate” Christianity which will be explored further in section 5.3b.

³⁰⁵ Henry Eyring, the scientist, is the father of Henry B. Eyring a member of the First Presidency. The two should not be confused.

³⁰⁶ The writing surrounding the split between Judaism and Christianity is voluminous (see for example Dunn, 2006; Boyarin, 2004; Becker & Reed, 2009) and cannot be adequately covered in this work. Whenever the split took place the supercessionary theology is replicated in the relationship between mainstream Christianity and Mormonism.

continuous spectrum with those who live by the Spirit that much further along than those still living solely in terms of the law (Dunn, 2006: 361).

Latter-day Saint fulfilment theology is not just limited to mainstream Christianity (as has been suggested by some writers (Shipps, 1987; Shipps, 1993; Cain, 1992)³⁰⁷ but to all of the religions of the world. Latter-day Saints believe that “the Restoration fulness completes and enhances the truths found in the religions of the world” (Keller, 1997: 274). Fulfilment theology within Mormonism could be seen to utilize the paradigm and teaching of the early Christian Church in its descriptions of Judaism. These descriptions are exemplified through various aspects of the Gospels. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt 5:17). Other Latter-day Saint scriptures outline a similar purpose to the restored Gospel: “And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers will I bring this part of my Gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up” (D&C 10: 52; see also 3 Ne 9:17). For Latter-day Saints the purpose of the message of Christ, in either dispensation, is to fulfil the truths that people already have.

For all people, Mormonism is the fulfilment of their accumulation of truth as exemplified in Coleman’s description of the relationship between traditional Christianity and Latter-day Saint Christianity in light of his own conversion:

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a Christian, and I am too. I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true “doctrine of Christ” since my conversion to the restored Church. These truths define this Church as having the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Coleman, 2007: 94).

³⁰⁷ See section 1.3a.

With regard to mainstream Christianity this fulfilment is further evidence of the supercessionary position that Mormons feel they hold.³⁰⁸ There may be elements of truth but, because of the apostasy, these truths that mainstream Christians have are insufficient to offer any salvific power. The truths that other Christian denominations hold are useful but not crucial to Latter-day Saints. The distinctiveness of their religion, for Mormons, lies in what they hold distinct and independence. Without the Restoration, Latter-day Saints feel that, there would be no path back to God. Building on this there is “nothing in [the Latter-day Saint] message [that] is more important than the announcement that there is a sure path— one true and living Church” (McConkie, J. 2007: 189). The continuum of truth and knowledge is thus dependent on the fact that there is a culmination and a fulfilment in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This same type of fulfilment, though not restoration, can be found in Latter-day Saint views of non-Christian religions. The Church is not seen to be restoring any organization of other religions, rather the truths that can found in those other religions find fulfilment in the acceptance of the Gospel. All of these truths in other religions have the potential to lead adherents to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its fulness of truths and ordinances. This echoes the teachings of Smith when discussing the conversions of people from other religions:

We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. We have not come here to berate you because of things you have not done; but we have come here as your brethren ... and to say to you: “Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father (Smith, G. A. 1948: 12-13).

³⁰⁸ See section 1.3c.

As examples of this supercessionary and fulfilment theology various aspects of Latter-day Saint teaching already explored in this work will be revisited.

5.2a (i) Christology

As explored earlier, the person and work of Christ is crucial to the development of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions: “[s]alvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ” (Smith, J. 1938: 323).³⁰⁹ Latter-day Saint teaching suggests that it is not enough to believe in Jesus, but rather to comprehend his nature and work: “it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God... Here, then, is eternal life-to know the only true and wise God” (Smith, J. 1938: 345-6). Where do other religions fit into the Christocentric particularism?³¹⁰ Christology in relation to other religions, and in particular traditional Christianity, provides an exemplar case study of the fulfilment alluded to earlier in this chapter.³¹¹ Latter-day Saints teach that anyone who declares Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, does so under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In consequence of this, other Christians are seen to be receiving inspiration and revelation; however, Latter-day Saints recognize that this understanding is incomplete and in need of fulfilment. This raises a tension in Mormon teaching when placed alongside the belief that other Christians are believing in incorrect doctrines and drawing “near to me (God) with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (JSH 1: 19). Similarly, “not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (3 Ne 14: 21; see also Matt 7: 21). How can Latter-day Saints hold the belief that, on the doctrine of Christ, Christians are both inspired and incorrect?

³⁰⁹ See section 2.2b.

³¹⁰ See chapter 2.

³¹¹ See section 5.2a.

This dialectical tension evident within a Latter-day Saint theology is partially answered through the linear continuum outlined earlier. If, on this continuum, the truth about Christ, his work and person is at one extreme end then a mainstream Christian understanding of Christ is placed elsewhere on the line. For example, the belief in the divine Sonship, harmonizing to some degree with Latter-day Saint teaching would be seen to be inspired and get a person/ religion so far along the continuum. However, the development of this understanding to encompass the fulness of truth, as understood by Latter-day Saints, would need completing/ fulfilling with a knowledge of the nature of the Son as a separate, physical and literal son of the Father. This linear development of truth could be related, not just to the eternal progression of humanity but also, to a metaphor explored in the *Book of Mormon*. The prophet Lehi has a dream of humanity (and more specifically his family) making progression to the tree of life (symbolizing the love of God (1 Ne 11: 22)). As they travel along this path they hold onto an iron rod (the word of God (1 Ne 15: 24)) which leads to the tree; various temptations and misguidance are placed in their path to lead them away from the iron rod (they are described as mists of darkness (1 Ne 8: 23)). In the linear development of truth Latter-day Saints could see the erroneous teachings of other religions as the mists of darkness. These mists stop the fulfilment of truth by creating confusion and diversions. These blocks to fulfilment would include descriptions of Christ as *homoousios* with the Father; described in the First Vision as “an abomination in his (God’s) sight” (JSH 1: 19). Mainstream Christianity can get a person so far in their understanding of Christ but only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can one find the complete truth. Although Latter-day Saints and mainstream Christianity share common beliefs about Christ, in the final account their teachings on Christ are poles apart. Hence, for Latter-day Saints traditional Christianity has only a partial understanding and does not, to a large extent, believe in the same Jesus:

They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition,

the creeds which came of a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (Hinckley, 2002:91-92).³¹²

This same linear development can be applied to non-Christian religions depending on their view of Christ, and reflection of truth found in Latter-day Saint teaching. A religion with a belief in Jesus is therefore further along the continuum than one with no knowledge of him. So, for example, the belief within Islam of Isa as a great prophet born of the virgin Maryam would be considered as containing elements of truth and partially along the line (but not as far, perhaps as the traditional Christian view). What view does this, therefore, give Latter-day Saints of other religions with a belief in Christ? At best, these religions are inspired with a belief in Christ but “blinded by the craftiness of men” through tradition, creeds and biblical interpretation (D&C 76: 75). At worst, religions are inspired with a belief in Christ but unwilling to receive the further truth that God will bless them with: “Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!” (2 Ne. 28: 29).

The Book of Mormon provides a reflection of the dialectical tension that can be found in other religions’ belief in Jesus:

[F]or every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ,

³¹² Millet argues that the Jesus taught in both evangelicalism and Mormonism, with slight differences, are “one and the same” (Millet and Johnson, 2007: 114). Although acknowledging differences, Millet suggests that for all intents and purposes the Christ worshipped by both communities is the same. Peterson and Ricks make a similar argument from a Latter-day Saint perspective (1992: 56-58). This is, perhaps, because they are at pains to argue for Mormonism’s inclusion within the Christian family of churches. The concern with such an approach is discussed later in this chapter (see section 5.3a and 5.3b).

and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him (Moro. 7: 16-17).

A religion, and its belief in Christ, can at the same time be “good” and “sent forth by the power and gift of Christ”, and also “of the devil”. If a person accepts the teachings of Christ and are open to further development and teaching along the linear continuum, then those beliefs serve the good, preparatory role with relation to fulfilment in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and, ultimately, exaltation. However, if those beliefs serve as a barrier to a person’s progression along the continuum then they are from the devil and any blessing that is associated with the belief is taken away:

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have (2 Ne. 28: 30).

From an eschatological perspective, people of other religions who fall into the latter category are those described as the inheritors of the telestial kingdom. They have wilfully rejected the further light which has been presented to them. There is no salvific power in believing in incorrect doctrines. Understandings of Christ, outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are the philosophies/ ideas of humanity mingled with scripture, and as such have no power to save.

In a great revelation on the priesthood the Lord states, “After they [the Apostles] have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the Church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon,

that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign-behold he soweth the tares [the philosophies of men]; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the Church into the wilderness” (D&C 86:3).

Experience suggests that the corruption of scripture by incorporating the philosophies of men is as dangerous individually as it is collectively. The fruits of this union do not engender the faith known to our forefathers, and, in the words of the Saviour, “every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt 15:13) (McConkie, J. 2007: 190).

This view of other religions and the source of their truth is a logical outworking of the teachings that can be found in a Latter-day Saint christology, and the belief in a linear continuum. The implications for attitudes towards other religions however, are not necessarily negative.

For Latter-day Saints, exaltation and salvation are available only through the grace of Christ. For the grace to be efficacious in a person’s life a correct belief and practice must be evident. This is exemplified in the Latter-day Saint view of the work of Christ. Christ’s atonement, in Latter-day Saint teaching, is the most central and crucial event to take place in the history of humanity; without it all would be “fallen and lost”, subject to the devil (1 Ne 10: 6). Only through the grace of Christ, evident in the atonement can a person be saved. Conversely, the sacrifice of Christ is eternal and universal, meaning that there is scope for everybody to receive of the grace of Christ, but it is activated by a person’s choices. The power of the Resurrection will come to all of humanity, blessing it with a general salvation. This is not, however, because of a person’s religion, but as a free gift as the result of their choice to follow Christ in the first estate. The gift of exaltation, available through the atonement, is both universal and restrictive. The atonement of Christ pays the penalty for everybody’s sins and the blessing of exaltation is therefore available to all. However, the atonement’s application to its fullest extent (exaltation) is dependent on living the commandments and receiving the necessary ordinances.

Again, while other religions have rites that are similar to those found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they are not efficacious because they are never performed by the proper authority, nor usually in the proper manner. These ordinances, in Latter-day Saint teaching, serve as channels of the grace and atonement of Christ, and also of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints believe that the comparable rites in other religions are counterfeit and devoid of saving grace.

The most positive interpretation of non-Latter-day Saint rites is as humanity striving to respond to the light of Christ which teaches, for example, the importance of baptism.³¹³ Upon realizing the importance of participating in such a rite, a person/ religion strives to respond to the imperative they feel. Latter-day Saints would see this response to be a person's own terms, or as a result of their own imaginings rather than being based in revelation. The teaching of baptism is the preparation for the reception of the fulness of the Gospel, not the reception of the ordinances. Indeed, the rite itself could be seen as a stumbling block along the linear continuum of truth:

Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this Church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen (D&C 22: 1-4).

³¹³ Hopkin (2010) explores the various commonalities among rituals in various religious traditions. In common with Latter-day Saint rituals and ordinances, those in other religions share similar elements and purposes.

It is possible that a person might use their adherence to prior ordinances and rites as a reason not to undergo them when offered them in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If a person recognizes their dependence on God and the need for rites to express that relationship, and receive of God's grace, then Latter-day Saints believe that the reception of the inspired ordinances should not be blocked by adherence to, what they would see as, empty rituals.³¹⁴ There is, however, the possibility that such ordinances in other religions could be seen to be preparatory (though not valid or salvific) to fulfilment on the continuum. If a person responds to the promptings of the light of Christ in desiring to be baptized, as an example, then it could be that they are expressing their reception of grace in the best way they can at that point. When presented with the fulness of such rituals and ordinances (as found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) they would recognize their previous rituals as preparation for the efficacious ones within Mormonism.

5.2a (ii) Pneumatology

The continuum of knowledge would be echoed in every aspect of theological or religious teaching. In a discussion of the work of the Holy Ghost, it is evident, for Latter-day Saints, that certain teachings are given by the light of Christ and/ or the Holy Ghost. These teachings serve as a preparation for further light and knowledge, culminating in the fulfilment through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is a continuum in the reception and knowledge of the Spirit which can be seen in the linear development of a person's response to truth.³¹⁵ The first stage is the reception of the light of Christ at birth. As the light of Christ is followed, and a person lives their life according to its revelations, a person feels the promptings

³¹⁴ "If we find truth in broken fragments through the ages, it may be set down as an incontrovertible fact that it originated at the fountain, and was given to philosophers, inventors, patriots, reformers, and prophets by the inspiration of God. It came from him through his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, in the first place, and from no other source. It is eternal" (Smith, J. F. 1939: 399).

³¹⁵ As outlined in chapter 3.

of the Holy Ghost as they receive further truth available through the teachings of the Church. If these promptings are listened to and followed, then the result will be the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost following baptism. This enables sins to be burned out of a person as if by fire, and the application of the ratifying seal of the Holy Spirit of promise.

Where, therefore, are other religions on this continuum of the Spirit? The answer is, again, dependent on the amount of truth, as understood by Mormonism, within their teaching. If these religions are to be found on this continuum it will be either as inspired by the light of Christ, or the promptings of the Holy Ghost, but not beyond. It is here, that Christian religions may find themselves further along this continuum in the knowledge they have of the Divine Sonship and atonement of Christ, even if that understanding is not complete. This belief in Christ could contain more of the promptings of the Holy Ghost than contrary views in other religions: “It is better to be a partial Christian than a non-Christian. It is better to believe some of the doctrines of Christ rather than none at all. One truth paves the way for another, and we all need to advance in knowledge and understanding” (McConkie, B. in McConkie, J. 2007: 181). However, this teaching still places all religions, including mainstream Christianity, in a remedial position which is perhaps not outwardly palatable:

Giving lip service to my Christianity whilst insisting that my faith is corrupt and incomplete, my baptism into Jesus Christ is invalid, and I’m not indwelt by the Holy [Ghost] (i. e. I don’t have the gift of the Holy Ghost) isn’t exactly a flattering assessment of my faith (Banack, 2010: n8).

In the end, however much a church or religion has inspired truths, it falls short of the salvific efficacy evident in the “only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1: 30).

It is evident, therefore, in this brief analysis of the teachings associated with christology and pneumatology discussed at length in this work that every other religion, outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints falls short of the fulness of truth, and has no authority to perform the rites necessary for exaltation. Other religions provide no means to receive either salvation or exaltation. They are, at best, helpful mechanisms that have been inspired, to some degree, to lead people to the fulness of truth available in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Opposite this hopeful view of other religions, is the associated teaching that mixed with this degree of inspiration are either the philosophies of men, or the inspirations of the devil. Both of these interpretations block adherents; serve as obstacles to the reception of further truth; and hinder progress along the continuum, as people cling to deeply held beliefs. As examples, a belief in the trinity with its associated teaching of *homoousios* could prevent people from accepting the Latter-day Saint teaching of three persons in one Godhead.³¹⁶ Or, the teaching of Islam that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, could prevent acceptance of the prophetic role of Joseph Smith and his successors. Similarly, a belief in the binary separation at judgement may make a person resistant to the teaching of an almost universalist general salvation in different levels.

In a Latter-day Saint view, people of other religions will receive salvation and exaltation *in spite of* and, at the same time, *because of* their religion. Other religions offer no saving power but do serve a preparatory role to the reception of further knowledge and truth. It does reinforce the missionary imperative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Whether in this life, or the next, every person must receive the opportunity to fulfil the knowledge and truth they have acquired:

³¹⁶ This work recognizes that the doctrine of the Trinity is deeper than one concept or word, it is not, however, necessary to explore it here.

First of all, we are asking all you fine people over here to keep all the glorious truths that you have acquired in your churches, that you have absorbed from your scriptures; keep all that, keep all the fine training that you have received in your educational institutions, all the knowledge and truth that you have gained from every source—keep it all. Keep all the fine characters that have been developed, everything that is good in your character that has come to you as a result of your lovely home; keep all the love and the beauty that is in your heart from having lived in so beautiful and wonderful a land—keep it all. That is all a part of the Gospel.

Then let us sit down and share with you some of the things that have not yet come into your lives that have enriched our lives and made us happy. We offer it to you without money and without price. All we ask you to do is hear what we have to say, and if it appeals to you, accept it freely. If it does not, then we will go our way to somebody else that we hope will be more fortunate, that will accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness and thereby enrich his life (Smith, G. A. 1972 [1870]: 33).

Smith highlights both the continuum of truth and knowledge and the necessity of missionary work. The Gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a better way, and people should grasp it when it is offered. This continuum, and the missionary imperative, form an important basis for Latter-day Saint relations and dialogue with other religions that will be explored in the second part of this chapter.

A further element of the continuum that could extend into eternity is about the development of relationships. Throughout this work relationships with the Godhead and other people have been at the forefront of a person's mortal experience and their ultimate exaltation.³¹⁷ The nature of exaltation, in Mormon belief, is as a fulfilment of a relationship with the Godhead

³¹⁷ See chapters 2 and 3.

that has been developed throughout the pre-earth life, mortality, and the spirit world.³¹⁸ The complete relationship with the Godhead is only available to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is due to a number of different reasons:

(1) A true relationship can only be based on a correct knowledge; and only Latter-day Saints have a true understanding of who God is, his nature and work.³¹⁹

(2) This relationship is developed through interactions with each member of the Godhead; these relationships are only available in their fulness within the boundaries of the Church.

(3) To become the children of Christ, and have a complete relationship with him, a person must accept his atonement evidenced through membership in the Church and the following of commandments (see Mosiah 5:7; Mosiah 27:25; D&C 25:1).

(4) To receive the possibility of a full and constant relationship with the Holy Ghost, a person must receive confirmation.³²⁰

(5) The relationship with the Godhead is evidenced through, and prepared for through relationships with other people.³²¹ This reflects the teaching of Jesus that “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt 25: 40).

The extent to which this relationship is developed is expressed within a person’s life and actions. *The Book of Mormon* suggests that a change takes place in a person reflecting this grace:

³¹⁸ See section 2.2a (iv).

³¹⁹ See section 2.2b.

³²⁰ See section 3.2b.

³²¹ See section 3.2d.

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the Church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? (Alma 5: 14).

This “mighty change” is associated with the reception of the Holy Ghost, and could therefore be interpreted as exclusivist. However, there is a hopeful interpretation to the development of relationships with other people being a preparation for exaltation. The making of a new creature could suggest that the image of Christ in a person’s countenance as being more than adherence to certain ordinances. If the actions which a person performs are evidence of the presence of Christ’s grace then it is possible suggest that those actions are performed by a person of any religion. Smith taught that the motivation behind such actions might be the same: “In reality and essence... we do not differ so far in our religious views, but that we could all drink into one principle of love” (Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 5: 499). Thus if someone “feeds the hungry” they are reflecting the light of Christ, and a portion of his grace within their life. They could also be reflecting an embryonic relationship with the Godhead.³²² This relationship can only be completed through joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, in a similar way to knowledge being preparatory to the reception of the fulness of truth, service is an evidence of a partial relationship that finds fulfilment in the completion of a unity with the Godhead. This interpretation of a preparatory relationship, based on action, can be seen to be reflected in McConkie’s hierarchy of religions (McConkie, B. 1981a: 69-71).³²³ At the same level as the religions of the world McConkie lists temperance societies and the like, suggesting that it is the standards of decency rather than the system that is important.

³²² Reflective of the belief that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

³²³ See section 4.3d (i).

If actions can be evidence of grace, then religions which encourage people to follow certain behaviours could be seen to contain partial truths in their moral code. However, as practices are at variance with those found within Mormonism they could provide stumbling blocks to the evidencing of faith and grace. In the same way that a positive action evidences grace and the existence of a relationship, does a negative action evidence a lack of grace, and move a person further out of a relationship with the Godhead? In conjunction with their reception of truth, how a person lives their code of ethics (religion) will determine their level of salvation. These religions, as they seek to draw people into a relationship with the Godhead, can be seen to be a fulfilling of God's purposes:

For all the good which such an organization may accomplish the Lord will give them credit, and they will be rewarded for their efforts to establish faith in the hearts of people, I believe far beyond their expectations, for everything that is good, and persuadeth men to do good, cometh from God. The Latter-day Saints wish all people who are thus striving God-speed (Ivins, 1926: 18-19).

This indicates a reflection of the hopeful place of other religions in a theology of religions. The works that individuals perform are not counterfeit expressions of the teachings of God. Rather they are important expressions of a preparatory relationship with the Godhead. This is an important recognition in the construction of a Latter-day Saint theology of religions; religions and their codes of morality provide an opportunity to develop a relationship with the Godhead. This may not to the same degree outside of religious frameworks, as religions can be seen to contain elements of the light of Christ, such as a belief in God, not available in social societies. The "credit" given is not, however, salvific. Only when this good is combined with the saving ordinances found within the Church can a person be seen to be within the covenantal relationship. The elements of mainstream theologies of religions that may offer a more hopeful interpretation of exaltation (such as "holy pagans" or "anonymous Christians") do not exist

within Mormonism. All of the people in salvation history, who could be termed holy pagans, were actually within the covenantal relationship (for example Melchizedek).³²⁴

However, the light of Christ does signify the burgeoning of a relationship with the Godhead. The relationship that the whole human family enjoyed in the pre-existence is replaced by the light of Christ. This manifests the will of God to all people and strives to draw people into a closer relationship with the Godhead. As people ignore or dull the light of Christ then that relationship diminishes. It would thus follow that religions and teachings that have more of the light of Christ would provide better opportunities to lead people into a fulness of relationship. However, as with knowledge, these stages in a relationship can either be helpful mechanisms, or stumbling blocks to the fulfilment in the covenantal relationship.

An imperfect analogy to human relationships may help explain how these relationships are developed or, possibly, hindered. If the courtship and marriage process of the Western world is examined, the various stages could be likened to a Latter-day Saint view of a person's relationship with God.³²⁵ The initial meeting or contact is similar to a person's awareness of the transcendent, something outside of themselves that is instigated by the light of Christ. That initial spark or feeling is developed through further contact or actions that draw two people into a relationship. This is similar to the light of Christ being acted upon. There are, however, faults within the person that need to be encountered and overcome. These faults could be the aspects of the light of Christ that are not acted upon, sometimes people cannot get past these and cling to them as reasons for maintaining the status quo and not taking the relationship further. As more time is spent nourishing the right parts of the relationship people desire to know more and

³²⁴ See section 4.3d (i). The place of Melchizedek as within the covenantal relationship would have been known during his lifetime, but has been lost as a result of "a lack of adequate sources and information" but restored in Latter-day Saint scripture (Judd, 2005: 69; see also 1 Ne. 13; Alma 13). The possibility of unknown, or "anonymous" people being within the covenantal relationship is thus negated.

³²⁵ The use of marriage and relationships as an analogy for humanity's relationship to God is not without precedent (see for example Hosea and Ephesians 5).

develop greater levels of commitment. They may go through commitment ceremonies in an attempt to solidify and evidence the depth of their relationship. However, these are faint copies, or only a prelude to the actual fulfilment of the relationship in the marriage covenant. Other religions could be seen to be an early stage of a relationship, but the relationship cannot, and will not, be fulfilled until the covenants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are entered into. That these other religions can be seen as either preparatory, as in this example, or diversionary is reflected in the Old Testament. As some people may not pursue the fulfilment of a relationship in marriage, people who follow other religions could be seen to be “whoring” after other gods (Exodus 34:16; Ezekiel 23:30), seeking to cheapen the covenant relationship with hollow alternatives. Nelson has discussed how various types of marriage can be seen to be less than the full commitment:

The importance of choice may be illustrated by a homespun concept that came to mind one day when I was shopping in a large retail store. I call it “patterns of the shopper”. As shopping is part of our daily life, these patterns may be familiar.

Wise shoppers study their options thoroughly before they make a selection. They focus primarily on the quality and durability of a desired product. They want the very best. In contrast, some shoppers look for bargains, and others may splurge, only to learn later—much to their dismay—that their choice did not endure well. And sadly, there are those rare individuals who cast aside their personal integrity and steal what they want. We call them shoplifters.

The patterns of the shopper may be applied to the topic of marriage. A couple in love can choose a marriage of the highest quality or a lesser type that will not endure. Or they can choose neither and brazenly steal what they want as “marital shoplifters” (2008: 92).

In a similar way people pursue shoplifted or bargain marriages (relationships with deity) but find no lasting value. Consequently other religions can ultimately provide no lasting value for their adherents.

A Latter-day Saint theology of religions thus retains a dialectical tension. Other religions (including other Christian denominations) could be considered to be inspired of God, human understanding, or of the devil. Their adherents can be seen to be people progressing along the continuum to exaltation, while others could be seen to be rejecting the further light and knowledge available on the continuum and in wilful disobedience to God. A person who lives by the ethical code of the religion could be evidencing God's grace that they have received in this life in preparation for a hopeful judgement, while others could be adhering rigidly in a pharasaical manner to the letter of their code, to the exclusion of further enlightenment and practices from the light of Christ. Religions can either, therefore, be a helpful mechanism, or a barrier to exaltation.

5.2a (iii) Eschatology

Each aspect of the continuum finds its culmination, and complete fulfilment, in an exploration of Latter-day Saint eschatology. Relating back to the development of the individual through the linear plan of salvation,³²⁶ the development of the intelligence is complete as it has passed through mortality, and in the Resurrection receives an immortal body similar to that of the Father and the Son. Knowledge is fulfilled as each member of humanity is given the opportunity to receive of the truth of Christ and his Gospel. This is reflected in judgement when all will acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour.³²⁷ The relationships with family, other people,

³²⁶ See section 5.2a.

³²⁷ See section 4.2c.

and the Godhead are all fulfilled in the celestial kingdom.³²⁸ For Latter-day Saints these relationships are complete and eternal; “the same sociality” will exist there but with a greater degree of depth as it is “coupled with eternal glory” (D&C 130: 2).

The extension of the continuum beyond death enables Latter-day Saints to explore fully the importance and veracity of other religions, their rites and teachings. None of these are salvifically efficacious in any way; however, the way that a person has lived their moral code is fulfilled as it is coupled with an acceptance or rejection of the further truth and ordinances offered. In this sense, Latter-day Saints should encourage people of other religions to live up to the light they have received. This serves a dual purpose: firstly, by so doing the person will receive “line upon line” and be more prepared to accept the fulfilment Latter-day Saints offer; secondly, it will enable a more hopeful judgement following Resurrection. The response to the light received does not bring exaltation, but does provide a greater reward in the kingdoms of glory more likely. It could be suggested that it is more desirable for a person to follow a religion, as they are thus able to follow more of the light of Christ. However, these religions might block further acceptance, so belonging to no religion may enable a person to be free from any ties that would stop them progressing along the continuum. Again, this is dependent on the individual, but at their “best” religions provide more light and knowledge than is available to the non-religious.

While each of the elements of the continuum is fulfilled after death, those outside of the celestial kingdom will not have their relationships completely fulfilled.³²⁹ They do not become one with the Godhead, nor do they have the opportunity to develop and complete their

³²⁸ See section 4.2d (i) and (ii).

³²⁹ See sections 4.2d (iii) and (iv).

relationships with their families. This, then, is damnation in Latter-day Saint teaching; to be outside of eternal relationships.

A Latter-day Saint theology of religions could also be considered in some ways universalist with reservations. Traditional understandings of universalism are expanded and developed, to construct what could be termed a Latter-day Saint christocentric universalism. Mormonism is universalist in the sense that all, but a very small minority, will receive salvation. It is christocentric because all who receive salvation will receive it because of Christ's grace, and only after "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him... that he is God" (Mosiah 27: 31). The distinct nature of Latter-day Saint beliefs about the nature and work of Christ, pneumatology and its associated ecclesiology, along with the unique eschatology of continued evangelization and vicarious ordinance work, resulting in varying degrees of salvation (including damnation) develops a universalism that pushes the boundaries beyond those traditionally explored by mainstream Christianity.

In teaching that all adherents of these religions will receive a level of salvation Latter-day Saints believe that no person outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be in perdition. The religion itself is not salvific in any way, nor is it a channel of Christ's grace. The preparatory role which the religions could be seen to serve, while hopeful to a degree, is dismissive and would not be palatable to religions which hold their teachings and practices to be sacred and not mere preparation or echoes of the truth. Similarly, these beliefs regarding other religions could be used in different ways when members of the Church, and the Church organization, encounter other religions (individually or collectively).

5.2b A Latter-day Saint theology of religions and theologies of the religions paradigms

In utilizing the usual paradigms within Christian theology of religions it is difficult to position a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. A Latter-day Saint theology of religions contains elements that are, at the same time, exclusivist, inclusivist, to some degree pluralist, and to a greater extent universalist. In adopting an exclusivist stance Latter-day Saints can be seen to exclude those outside of its established structures and beliefs (including orthodox belief in Christ, membership of his Church, completion of the ordinances of exaltation, and without knowledge of, and living, the commandments) to damnation. However good or true individual parts of religions may be, they are part of a system that provides no power to save, and no truths sufficient to build a proper relationship with Christ. While some Latter-day Saints may like to point to these truths as inspired, others may echo the words of Kraemer when he constructed a traditional Christian theology of religions: —

Every religion is a living, indivisible unity. Every part of it- a dogma, a rite, a myth, an institution, a cult- is so vitally related to the whole that it can never be understood in its real function, significance and tendency, as these occur in the reality of life, without keeping constantly in mind the vast and living unity of existential apprehension in which this part moves and has its being (Kraemer, 1938: 135).

Some Latter-day Saints go further and suggest that all truth is a copy instigated by the devil (see Palmer et al, 1997). However, the contention of this thesis is that this inspiration of the devil model of truth in other religions is not borne out by closer scrutiny of Latter-day Saint teaching.³³⁰ Exclusivism is perhaps the most obvious of the paradigms that can be aligned with

³³⁰ See sections 2.4 and 4.4.

Mormonism (based on such sayings as “Will everybody be damned, but Mormons? Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent, and work righteousness” (Smith, J. 1980 [1902], vol 3:28)), but it is not simply this straightforward.

There are elements of Latter-day Saint teaching which are also inclusivist. In considering the classification, there are various traditional Christian writers who could be considered to be within this category (for example Pinnock, 1992; Rahner 1991). In each case the scope of salvation is extended through the extension of the grace and efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice. Rahner, within the Roman Catholic tradition, suggests a broadening of the Church’s boundaries to posit the existence of “anonymous Christians”:

...we can only reconcile them [the two axioms] by saying that somehow all men must be capable of being members of the Church; and this capacity must not be understood merely in the sense of an abstract and purely logical possibility, but as a real and historically concrete one (quoted in D’Costa, 1986: 83).

Thus, when a person acts upon the inspiration of the spirit they are signifying their (unknowing) acceptance of Christ. Pinnock goes further in exploring and expanding the role of the Holy Ghost:

God is active by his Spirit in the structures of creation, in the whole of history, even in the sphere of the religions. The breath of God is free to blow wherever it wills (John 3: 8). The economy of the Spirit is not under our control, and certainly is not limited to the Church (Pinnock, 1992: 78).

Inclusivism argues that through Christ’s sacrifice people can be saved by acceptance of the grace and Holy Ghost evident through creation, which may include other religions. Christ remains

paramount, however. The totalitarian approach of exclusivism is generally mediated to a more personalist approach to judgement:

From a personalist perspective, bearing in mind that, generally speaking, God deals with individual persons rather than religions en bloc, it is not difficult to see how the Logos might encounter and work transformingly within an individual seeker while judging the religion to which he or she belongs. The point is that the Logos thesis does not necessarily imply that the religion itself is a manifestation of the Logos [as could be said of Rahner's thesis] (Partridge, 2000: 203).

The work of the logos is similar to the Godhead working through light of Christ in Latter-day Saint teaching.³³¹ Similarly, the level of reward in Latter-day Saint eschatology is partly on the basis of how well a person has lived according to the ethical code they have received. This reward and these actions are only possible through the grace of Christ; salvation remains within him. These elements of Latter-day Saint teachings might fit neatly into inclusivism, but there are other beliefs that would place the theology of religions outside of inclusivism. Exaltation is only possible through the fulfilment of knowledge and action in the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without reception of ordinances and the fulness of truth no one can receive a fulness of salvation (exaltation).

Pluralism is perhaps the paradigm least reflective of Latter-day Saint teaching, but parallels can be found between the two. Hick argues for a revolution in theology of religions:

And the needed Copernican revolution in theology involves an equally radical transformation in our conception of the universe of faiths and the place of our own religion within it. It involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to

³³¹ See section 3.3a.

the realization that it is God who is at the centre, and that all the religions of world, including our own, serve, and revolve around him (1973: 131).

Pluralism argues that all religions, at root, are essentially all the same and different paths to salvation. Without exploring the problems that have been identified with this paradigm (see for example D'Costa, 1986), this placing of religions on an equal par with Mormonism would be rejected.³³² The most a religion can be is preparatory to the acceptance of the fulness of truth, and the development of a relationship with Christ.

While this understanding of religious truth is rejected in Latter-day Saint theology there are elements of pluralism that contain echoes of their teachings. In *Evil and the God of Love* Hick argues that only those who have gone through a salvific transformation will receive immediate reward. For others there is a waiting period.

If, then God's purpose of the perfecting of human beings is ever to be fulfilled, it must either be brought to an instantaneous completion by divine fiat, perhaps at the moment of death, or else take place through a continued development within some further environment in which God places us (1985: 347).

³³² Toscano suggests in *The Sanctity of Dissent* (1994) that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not unique in its revelation of Jesus Christ or God. Indeed, Toscano echoes Hick in suggesting that:

...people are called of God to their spiritual convictions... Some are called to one religion, some to another, and some to none at all". He continues that "for those called by birth or rebirth to be Latter-day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth. This is not to deny the truths to which God has called others (1994:112).

Hamblin suggests that Toscano goes outside of the Latter-day Saint belief that religions, and religious leaders, are recipients of the light of Christ; "[r]ather, he is claiming that all religions are equally true. Therefore, Christianity is just as true as Buddhism, Islam, or Hinduism—but no more so (1995: 303). Toscano was excommunicated from as a result of his "heretical" views and while his work might belong to Latter-day Saint culture, it could be seen to be on the fringe.

This may be considered a part of Hick's pluralism rather than pluralism *per se*, indeed, there could be an argument made that Hick has gone beyond the boundaries of a pluralistic paradigm. However, a waiting period prior to final judgement is slightly similar to the Latter-day Saint belief in the spirit world, perhaps more so when compared with the purgatorial purpose. For Hick, "all will ultimately achieve salvation through a gradual, and at times painful, therapeutic and purgatorial process continuing beyond this life... and leading eventually to the conformity of the person to what Christian tradition has called the 'divine likeness'" (Hart, 1992: 7). This is highly reminiscent of the suffering endured by those leaving spirit prison prior to judgment, but to make such a comparison is to extend the similarities too far. As with exclusivism and inclusivism, pluralism only has partial relationship with a Latter-day Saint theology of religions. Latter-day Saint teaching cannot be neatly accommodated into any of these paradigms.

5.2c Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions

In light of the continuum, and the eventual fulfilment that each person will find (either partially or completely), how should Latter-day Saints treat those of other religions? The suggestion is that the religious beliefs that people hold are either stumbling blocks or helpful mechanisms to a person's relationship with God and eventual degree of salvation. It would be possible, for a Latter-day Saint to treat other religions disparagingly as those truths are disguised and intermingled with error. However, this would not reflect the general attitude of numerous Latter-day Saint writings that suggest they should "treat all whom we meet with dignity and respect— heartily joining hands with all whose lives are founded on the principles of love and kindness" (McConkie, J. 2007: 181). The resultant attitude from a hierarchy of truths and religions does not, necessarily, have negative implications for inter-faith dialogue. Being open to learn from other religions' practice of shared truth suggests a humility that is not automatically associated with teaching a fulfilment theology. Rather than judging other religions harshly Smith suggested:

If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning, for truth will cut its own way. Do you believe in Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation which he revealed? So do I. Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst; and they will do it before the millennium can be ushered in and Christ takes possession of His kingdom (Smith, J. 1938: 313).

One of the *Articles of Faith* of Mormonism allows all people “the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of [their] own hearts” (1:10).³³³ In essence, Latter-day Saints should treat those of other religions positively, judging them at their very best. In light of this thesis, the very best would be observing a person’s religion as a helpful mechanism on the way to exaltation. The resultant attitudes and actions

...may at times be to encourage Marxists to become better Marxists, Jews and Muslims to become better Jews and Muslims, and Buddhists to become better Buddhists (although admittedly their notion of what a “better Marxist,” etc., is will be influenced by Christian norms). Obviously this cannot be done without the most intensive conversation and cooperation (Lindbeck, 1984: 54).

A Latter-day Saint might see that a person is truly living the Gospel as they help others live their religion without fear of condemnation. They would have the responsibility “to treat those with

³³³ Recently reiterated by Nelson: “Religious liberty is essential if we are to raise up righteous children. Morally responsible families will not marginalize religious liberty, they will nurture and protect it” (2009: 19; see also Oaks, 2011).

differing views with the dignity and respect they deserve” (Millet, 2005: 172).³³⁴ This could be seen to recognize the writings of Smith:

The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a Mormon, I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denominations who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves (Smith, J. 1938: 313)

From a Latter-day Saint perspective if this is the attitude members adopt, then the light of Christ, that followers of other religions recognize will lead ultimately to fulfilment in the Gospel either in this life or the next. Therefore, judging religious beliefs as helpful mechanisms will enable attitudes towards, and engagement with, other religions to be grounded theologically in friendship and cooperation.³³⁵

Having established a theology of religions this chapter will now move on to consider the implications of these beliefs for engagement with other religions. Using these implications, suggestions for a way forward in dialogue for Latter-day Saints will be posited.

³³⁴ Echoing the words of Tanner: “Let us always remember that men of great character do not belittle others nor magnify their weaknesses” (1980: 4).

³³⁵ This recognizes the starting point and judgements inherent in interreligious dialogue advocated by Paul:

Those with cultural or religious fundamental disagreements would be prudent (without compromising integrity) to grant each other the benefit of the doubt with respect to motives and intelligence. They should begin by assuming the other to be a trustworthy opponent desiring to help—not a vicious enemy bent on destruction (2011: 2).

5.3 Implications for engagement with other religions

5.3a Concern over syncretism and dilution

Utilizing the recognition that religions and their adherents should be treated as helpful mechanisms on the path to exaltation does not negate the need to recognize that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true Church. Various aspects throughout this thesis have highlighted the binary separation between members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and those who are non-members. Characterizations include: “gentiles”; “Church of the devil”; and “apostate” (all of which have their basis in Latter-day Saint scripture).³³⁶ These characterizations are supported by the corollary views of the Church as the “Church of the Lamb of God”; “the only true and living Church”; and the only true form of Christianity. With relation to engagement with other religions this view would lead to the conclusion that Latter-day Saints should not engage with them. Latter-day Saints could be susceptible to the deceit of the devil, or the dilution of their own beliefs, by engaging with false religions.

The concern could also be, not merely the dilution, but also the syncretism that could result in the creation of “some strange hybrid religion that reconciles two religions that make competing truth claims” (Gartenstein-Ross, 2007: 14). Whether on an institutional level or in the faith of an individual, Latter-day Saints would be very resistant to any type of dialogue that could be seen, in any way, to have their beliefs and doctrines diluted (especially when the beliefs of others are seen as devil inspired). Other religions and their beliefs can be seen as stumbling blocks, obstacles to the reception of the fulness of truth. In a similar way they can be seen as stumbling blocks in the erosion of a person’s belief. The danger that Latter-day Saints could

³³⁶ See chapters 2 and 4 especially.

perceive from other religions, and from dialogue with them, can be exemplified by an example from mainstream Christianity:

In a 2003 Christmas sermon, the Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane, Episcopal bishop of Washington, D.C., asked a series of rhetorical questions: “And what was God thinking... when the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to reveal the Law to Moses? And what was God thinking . . . when the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to reveal the sacred Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad? And what was God thinking . . . when the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to reveal the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?” This was particularly puzzling, since the Rt. Rev. Chane affirmed Jesus as the Son of God in the same breath that he affirmed the sacred nature of the Qur'an, which expressly denies the Holy Trinity (Gartenstein-Ross, 2007: 10).

A statement that is intended to placate both Christians and Muslims could be seen to please neither. The desire to please and accept every voice within inter-faith dialogue actually serves to undermine the process. It is this type of example that could deter Latter-day Saints from engaging with other religions. As a faith that is identified by its particularity, the mingling of its most deeply held doctrines in a metaphorical melting pot of beliefs would be alarming. The lowest common denominator approach to inter-faith dialogue is characterized by Sivanda who argues: “The fundamentals or essentials of all religions are the same. There is difference only in the non-essentials” (2004: 2). Latter-day Saints would balk at the assignation of “non-essential” to the divine Sonship of the Saviour, the prophetic calling of the prophet Joseph Smith, and that the *Book of Mormon* is the word of God. These beliefs are distinctly Mormon doctrines and essential to the Mormon identity and belief. For engagement with other religions to take place it needs

“...to be brought back to the individual religious community... [T]his cannot be done in such a way as to undermine the particularity and integrity of an individual community, but needs to be done in a manner which allows that community to become more genuinely the community of faith it already is” (Greggs, 2010: 196).

Any Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions must be done in the context of their own beliefs and culture. Parameters and purposes for Latter-day Saint inter-faith dialogue need to be established to ensure focussed and meaningful discussion. The importance of Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions as a means of developing Latter-day Saint understanding of their own identity should not be underestimated. Greggs has argued that this development of self-identity should be an integral part of any engagement with other religions: “[M]eeting with the religious other should lead members of a faith community back to their own community; it should lead to a rethinking of identity in light of the religious other in order truly and more intensively to become oneself” (Greggs, 2010: 199). It is on this basis that this thesis suggests a paradigm of engagement with other religions for Latter-day Saints.

5.3b Self-definition in relation to mainstream Christianity

Latter-day Saints, in engaging with other religions, need to recognize their relationship to those same religions. Recalling the suggestion of MacIntyre: “Such a person is confronted by the claims of each of the traditions which we have considered as well as by those of other traditions. How is it rational to respond to them? The initial answer is: that will depend upon who you are and how you understand yourself” (1988: 393). This thesis has explored, at various points, the uneasy relationship that Mormonism has with mainstream Christianity.³³⁷ Latter-day Saints want to identify themselves as being within the Christian family of churches while, at the same time, identifying that same family of churches as “apostate” and in need of fulfilment

³³⁷ See for example section 1.3c.

through the doctrines and ordinances of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This discussion is important because the resolution of what Mormonism is and how it relates to Christianity as whole will frame the parameters and rules for the engagement that is to take place between the Latter-day Saints and mainstream Christians. If Mormonism is different (and both Latter-day Saints and mainstream Christians would agree that they are), then how should they view and write about each other? As an example, from a Latter-day Saint perspective there have (if not in writing, then certainly in conversation) been polemical statements about evangelical Christianity. Conversations of such a nature tend to focus around the idea of “cheap grace”³³⁸ that once a person is saved it does not matter what they do.³³⁹ However, surely Mormons must accept the same standards and rules of debate that they expect in other people’s treatment of them. This returns to the discussion of how it is proper to engage with other religions.³⁴⁰ If mainstream Christianity is viewed unpolemically, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, then it should be possible for Latter-day Saints to “differ theologically with people without being disagreeable in any sense” (Hinckley, 1995: 66).

Perhaps unknowingly, the overwhelming attitude of Latter-day Saint dialogue has been focussed around the desire for Mormons to be seen as Christians. This may be a rather simplistic

³³⁸ McConkie, while not being polemical, does extend a dismissive attitude in discussing this “religious craze”:

While driving along a highway in my car, I was listening to the radio sermon of one of these evangelists who was preaching of salvation by grace alone. He said all anyone had to do to be saved was to believe in Christ and perform an affirmative act of confession.

Among other things he said: “If you are traveling in a car, simply reach forth your hand and touch your car radio, thus making contact with me, and then say, ‘Lord Jesus, I believe,’ and you will be saved”.

Unfortunately, I did not accept his generous invitation to gain instant salvation; and so I suppose my opportunity is lost forever! (1989: 1-2).

³³⁹ This is not to suggest that similar views, or conversations, are held with regard to all Christians. This example is used for ease of explanation.

³⁴⁰ See section 5.2c.

explanation, but when Latter-day Saints spend their time trying to prove their Christianity, in some ways they are missing the opportunity to delve deeper into similarities, differences, and shared values. Davies has argued that “as the twenty-first century proceeds... Latter-day Saints will find it easier simply to assert their uniqueness without debating the precise meaning of ‘Christian’ at all” (2000: 246). For most Latter-day Saints in dialogue with mainstream Christians, the question of their Christianity is the elephant in the room that nobody can ignore. It is the argument of this thesis that it is an unnecessary diversion. To some degree, elements of the arguments that Latter-day Saints use could be seen to employ double standards. Blomberg argues, quite convincingly, that “recent LDS writings... instead of trying to demonstrate how corrupt early postapostolic Christianity became, mine the preconiliar literature for supposed parallels to Mormon distinctives” (2002: 319). Latter-day Saints “cherry pick” from, by their own admission, apostate Christian sources to prove their Christianity. Blomberg rightly argues that “Latter-day Saints cannot have it both ways” (2002: 319); if they wish to assert their own Christian distinctiveness and a belief in the apostate nature of traditional Christianity they cannot borrow from these sources to prove their orthodoxy. They can recognize that there are elements of writings that appear similar to Mormon teachings, and, these writings could be used to help to unpack what is meant by these doctrines within Mormonism. As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, there is justification for the use of mainstream sources to enable Mormon theology to be extended and developed through dialogue.³⁴¹ However, using these sources in an apologetic way to “prove” Mormonism’s placement in the mainstream should be avoided.³⁴² What is sometimes done is that aspects, which are similar to those found in the mainstream, are picked out to highlight how Mormonism is a restoration of ancient truths; other aspects of the same

³⁴¹ See chapter 1. Musser and Paulsen (2007) provide an example of how both theologies can be challenged, extended and developed in dialogue with one another.

³⁴² Huggins (2006) discusses this honesty in some scholar’s presentation of the doctrine of deification in Mormonism as essentially the same as that within the Eastern Orthodox Church. Latter-day Saints should be careful of applying a Mormon hermeneutic to other Christian writings.

writer(s) are ignored if they disagree. If Mormons use such elements in their teaching they should be used transparently. In order for honest dialogue, between mainstream Christians and Latter-day Saints, to exist it is important that each recognize that the other is beginning their discussion of Christianity from a different place. Only in so doing, and being accepting that the other person views them in a way that they may not necessarily agree with, can a discussion begin. This will also offer clarity to engagement with non-Christian religions: it avoids the confusion of attempted claims to be Christian which exists at the same time as seeing all other Christian denominations as apostate.

5.3c Self-definition in relation to non-Christian religions

Latter-day Saints face similar issues in relation to non-Christian religions. Each religion and their adherents are at different points on the same continuum towards fulfilment. However, a recognition that each religion is at different points in a hierarchy of truth suggests that there may be different approaches to each religion in turn; therefore, rather than discussing implications for engagement with other religions, it may be more accurate to describe distinctive engagements with different religions rather than treating them as one homogenous group. This involves the recognition that there is “no singular, ‘one size fits all’ approach to other religions” (Greggs, forthcoming: 363-364).

A Latter-day Saint starting point for dialogue with non-Christian religions is much clearer than with mainstream Christianity. The confused nature of relationships, and how the “other” is viewed, is not evident with regard to non-Christian religions in the way it is for mainstream Christian engagements. Mormonism is certainly “other” and Latter-day Saints quite easily characterize these religions as “other”. Indeed, Davies argues that engaging with non-Christian religions “it becomes much easier to describe the significance of LDS doctrine and

belief” (2000: 246). This provides a glimpse of what could be achieved in relation to mainstream Christianity if the debate moves on and becomes free of existing prejudices.

Engaging with non-Christian religions provides a catch-22 situation for Latter-day Saints. To understand how an individual religion should be approached Latter-day Saints should explore the relationship between the two religions, but the extent to how other religions relate to Latter-day Saints can only truly be discovered through encounter and dialogue. As a starting point, however, the recognition that other religions are on a continuum of knowledge, light and truth as a response to the divine might help the dialogical process. Throughout this thesis characteristics of the continuum have been explored with relation to knowledge and relationships. In recognizing the place of other religions as “embryonic Mormons”, but more specifically fellow children of God travelling on this continuum, it should provide Latter-day Saints with a greater impetus to engage with those of other religions. The opportunity to help develop a person’s knowledge of, and relationship, the Godhead should impel Latter-day Saints to take time to learn about a person’s religion to enable areas of fulfilment to be identified. There may be a temptation, in utilizing a fulfilment theology, to judge other religions harshly. This attitude would take the teachings that are not related to Mormonism and hold them up as evidence of an apostate or devil inspired philosophy. It may also identify elements that are similar to Mormonism and suggest that they are merely imperfect copies, but none of these would not be true to the belief that religions can serve as helpful mechanisms. However, rather than judging a religion at its worst, Latter-day Saints should look for the virtues in other religions.

As Latter-day Saints, both on an individual and institutional basis, continue in engagement, the points of convergence and divergence will develop and how the relationship

can be deepened will become apparent.³⁴³ This engagement will utilize as its backdrop the necessity of observing religions and religious practice at their best. This attitude does not ignore the “worst” of other religions; rather it adopts a paradigm of engagement with other religions that incorporates the Golden Rule. Engaging with other religions, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, would always be against a background of fulfilment but should not necessitate an arrogance or dismissive nature. In this way Latter-day Saints can be true to their beliefs, but also enable those non-Christians to be true to theirs. There is a reciprocal paradigm that should be in place for both sides of the engagement.

Randall Paul, the founder of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy, has explored the benefits of contestational dialogue suggesting that:

The future for all useful religious interaction is mutuality (both listen carefully to gain more truth) and parity (both grant similar value to the intelligence, diligence, and good will of the other) and transparency (both acknowledge “holy envy” for the good they have not, and testify to the truth they have.) In the latter case of testifying, when their truths contradict each other, they engage in honourable contestation (personal email communication, April 7, 2010).

The honesty of such dialogue requires a “risk” from the participants, in the sense that they are sharing what is most sacred to them, and being open to a transformation of their own beliefs. In this way, engagement with other religions helps a Latter-day Saint “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5: 21). A Latter-day Saint would thus “hold fast” to the truth they hold while always being open to investigating more truth. It is possible to posit a way forward in Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions that retains honesty to its supercessionary theology, while also engaging with other religions as full partners in this

³⁴³ See sections 5.3e and f.

dialogue. It would then be possible for Latter-day Saints to utilize their belief in a continuum by recognizing and learning from truth, and also acknowledging the “mists of darkness” that other religions encounter by stating Mormonism’s opposition to such things. Paul argues that “If we stop dialogue at ‘mutual understanding of differences’ and do not allow someone to warn the other of heresy or blasphemy or unenlightened backward thinking, then we damn the flow of transparent truth they desire to transmit. No trust comes from such encounters” (personal email communication, April 7, 2011). Enabling truth and falsity, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, to be evident in dialogue enables a development of an individual’s faith by gaining new insights into truth from the “other”, but also defining what they believe against the falsity of the “other”.³⁴⁴

Understanding how Latter-day Saints view other religions is only one step in establishing a paradigm for engagement. The purposes of such engagement need to be explored for the paradigm to be complete.

5.3d A Missiological motivation

Latter-day Saints are missiological in their approach to other religions. Mission is one of the three main purposes of church organization. The imperative is not merely organizational however, it is also doctrinal. Oaks and Wickman outline the various scriptural injunctions in a section they entitle “Doctrinal Foundations” and then suggest the impact that these scriptures have on Latter-day Saints today:

For Latter-day Saints, who believe that God has restored vital additional knowledge and power to bless the lives of all his children and who believe that they have a duty to share these treasures with humankind, the command to witness is fundamental to all their

³⁴⁴ This type of dialogue will be explored further in sections 5.3d, e and f.

belief and practice. It is a vital part of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint. To all who hold these convictions, the duty to witness and to share is a fundamental matter of conscience (1999: 250).

Thus, the primary purpose of any Latter-day Saint's interaction with non-Mormons is missiological. This does not mean that in every discussion a Latter-day Saint is trying to convert; rather, that their desire is that all receive of the fulness of truth that they have. Using this missiological imperative as a foundation it is possible to argue that one of, if not the, main purpose of engagement with other religions is missionary in nature. From the perspective of a Mormon engaging in interreligious dialogue Paul recognizes this as a universal principle for all those engaging with other religions:

In contestational dialogue, participants desire to persuade others to adopt a more comprehensive truth or higher way to live through sharing their foundational experiences and reasons for giving allegiance to their particular religion or worldview rather than that of another. There is no attempt to coerce the other, only to persuade one's dialogue partner to consider adopting a different religious or ideological belief system (nd: 12).³⁴⁵

This is a logical outworking of the belief in a continuum of knowledge. If all the light in other religions is to point towards a fulness in Christ, then Latter-day Saints should engage in discussion to provide people with an opportunity to fulfil their existing knowledge. Any

³⁴⁵ Commenting on Mormonism, Shepherd and Shepherd identified the missiological motivation to be the main factor behind Mormon inter-faith activities:

The Mormon's claim to exclusive truth as the restored Church is one of those key beliefs which militates against the ecumenical spirit. No matter how this position might be softened by conceding the possession of partial truths in other religions. Mormonism, in order to remain true to its original premise, must conclude that every other religion in the world is ultimately in error. Any ecumenical (sic) cooperation between the Mormon Church and other religious bodies is most likely to be viewed by Mormons as primarily an opportunity to accomplish some missionary work or to generate favourable publicity for the Church (1984: 39).

Mormon justification of engagement with other religions must begin with mission as an overriding purpose.

Recognizing this fact may seem anathema to true dialogue where a person is open to what the other person is saying. However, there is a possibility that with both parties being firmly rooted in their own religious faith a third space opens between them where genuine interreligious dialogue can take place. Teece argues that “it is the space between us that constitutes holy ground, holiness being discovered through encounter” (Teece, 1993: 8). The dialogue becomes “open” when the exchange of ideas is honest, and each party is open to learning rather than acceptance. Greggs has argued that:

By engaging with the religious other, the practitioner of inter-faith engagement is in dialogue with other religious traditions, but, by engaging in the activity of dialogue with the religious other, practitioners of any individual faith are also in dialogue with the particular tradition of their own faith. In this way the transformative nature of inter-faith dialogue can become reformatory for the individual communities of those who engage in it (2010: 201).

For a Latter-day Saint this would mean that by engaging with other religions, and the light that they have, they are open to the reformation of some of their religious practice or beliefs. As a crude example, engaging with a Muslim about the purpose and practice of fasting and listening to what that person feels and experiences, may enable a Latter-day Saint to evaluate their own attitude and motivations towards the law of the fast, recognizing that other religions have light opens Latter-day Saints to this type of transformative learning. Brueggemann’s discussion of

dialogue in the Old Testament can be used to explore how dialogue can be transformative when the two parties engaged begin from unequal positions:³⁴⁶

... [T]he defining category for faith in the Old Testament is *dialogue*, whereby all parties— including God— are engaged in a dialogic exchange that is potentially transformative for all parties... including God. This constitutes a conviction that God and God’s partners are engaged in mutual talk. That mutual talk may take a variety of forms. From God’s side, the talk may be *promise* and *command*. From the side of the partners, it may be *praise and prayer*. The Old Testament is an invitation to reimagine our life and faith as a dialogic transaction in which all parties are summoned to risk and change (2009: xii).

Engagement with other religions thus becomes a “dialogic transaction” whereby Latter-day Saints may begin to change some of their understandings and behaviours. Inter-faith encounter may become transformative of a Latter-day Saints own belief and devotion. However, it should always be remembered that there are parameters of orthodoxy that should be maintained for Latter-day Saints.³⁴⁷ The “dialogic transaction” of engagement with other religions enables a further purpose to be added to Latter-day Saint participation in inter-faith activities (of whatever nature): through encounter with the other a greater development of one’s own belief and practice can be more deeply understood. This is not possible if the religions with which they are in dialogue are considered to be completely inspired by the devil, and so the previous discussions of more constructive views of other religions remain necessary.

³⁴⁶ Utilizing Brueggemann’s argument may seem out of place, however, Latter-day Saints in their, self-perceived, fulfilled position could be seen to be similar to God in the Old Testament dialogic process. God, it could be argued, would have nothing to gain from dialogue, because he has everything. Latter-day Saints may argue that they have nothing to gain because they have a fulness of truth.

³⁴⁷ For this reason, those participating in inter-faith dialogue should be, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, be grounded in their own faith.

To be open to learning from other religions means that Latter-day Saints need to recognize that there is truth in other religions; that those following these religions are not simply other, but fellow children of God at a different point in their eternal progression; and that these religions are providing their adherents with the opportunity to respond to the light of Christ. Smith argued that engagement with other religions is about developing relationships, and not just missiologically motivated, as referred to above (p. 233) he felt that people should build one another up in their faith and “cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst” (Smith, J. 1938: 313). This also means that when Latter-day Saints engage with other religions they should recognize the value and purpose of such dialogue. Hinckley suggested that in such encounters members should “Look for their [those of other religion’s] strengths and virtues, and you will find strengths and virtues in your own life” (in Dew, 1996: 576). This will, in no small part, come from defining oneself as other—in asserting and defending unique and divergent beliefs with those taught in other religions as evidenced in the First Vision. However, it will also come in the encounter between people and religions.

In genuine inter-faith encounter people can develop strength and faith as they are open to learn from each other: “When our hearts and minds are properly focussed, our dialogues with one another, however impassioned they may be, become the means by which we lovingly help each other appreciate aspects of God’s work we might otherwise overlook or fail to understand” (Boyd, 2000: 20). As Latter-day Saints engage with other religions they are able to learn things about their own faith as well as another person’s: “One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may” (Smith, J. 1938: 313). The benefits of engagement with other religions, for the Latter-day Saint, are not just a greater understanding of others but also a greater understanding of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint.

Thus, when a Latter-day Saint engages with other religions, understanding how they are to frame that relationship enables them to reflect far more deeply on what it means to be a Latter-day Saint. It is possible to posit the existence of a dialogical space between religions that constitutes “holy ground”. This third space enables a place where adherents of two religions meet to transform their understanding of one another, but also their understanding of themselves and their faith. The concept of a dialogical third space borrows heavily from the work of Bhabha (1994)³⁴⁸ but diverges from the resultant hybridity models that he suggests such spaces would create. Bhabha argues that the “third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom... The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (1990: 211). The hybridity and new structures would not be appropriate or desirable in engagement with other religions for reasons already enumerated. However, engagement with a third space as a place of “radical openness” (McMaster, 1999: 28) provides a perfect description of the type of space needed for inter-faith dialogue to be successful. The way that this space can be “radical” and transformative at the same time is in utilizing areas of convergence and divergence.

5.3e Recognizing convergence

If other religions contain elements of truth and the light of Christ, then it follows that Latter-day Saints will find in these religions areas of convergence. Whether the purpose of inter-faith dialogue is missiological or to be found in the third space, the recognition that there are shared values and doctrines is important for meaningful conversation and action to take place. In this type of engagement Latter-day Saints are able to appreciate and recognize the common

³⁴⁸ Although Bhabha’s work does not refer to interreligious dialogue it is possible to adapt some of his conclusions for use in such a sphere. As a precedent for this application to other areas, O’Toole (2006) has utilized third space theory for drama. Gutierrez (2008) has completed similar research about the development of language in the third space.

understanding that they share. The benefits of recognizing convergence are threefold for Latter-day Saints. Firstly, and as already explored,³⁴⁹ is the recognition that in shared discussion of similar topics, a Latter-day Saint can enhance their own faith and “find strengths and virtues” that can make them more rooted in their own religion.³⁵⁰ There is, however, a danger that has been highlighted at different points within this thesis; the fact that in seeking common ground it is possible to overreach and suggest links that do not exist. When recognizing elements of convergence it is important that this is done honestly, or the validity of the process will be destroyed. An example that has been used earlier is the declaration that Latter-day Saints believe in a different Jesus. Millet outlines that in relationships with other Christians suggesting that the Church is the only true one “does not mean that they (other Christians) are worshipping a ‘different Jesus’ True Christians worship Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah” (2007: 203). Although Millet argues for the convergent approach advocated in this section of the thesis, he goes too far in presenting a palatable view of Mormon teaching to non-Latter-day Saints. It may be true that the events of Jesus’ life are viewed similarly between Mormonism and other

³⁴⁹ See sections 5.3a and d.

³⁵⁰ An example of how this has been accomplished, outside of Mormonism, can be found in Scriptural Reasoning. This project works from the basis that “recognizing those differences can be a source of illumination to each” faith group (Ford, 2006: 345). In revealing that which is important to faith communities scriptural reasoning celebrates disagreement:

One might suggest that the handling of disagreements is one of the important ways participants in scriptural reasoning establish and acknowledge friendships. In a context which aims at consensus, disagreement is a problem to be overcome. In a context which values friendship, disagreement is a gift to be treasured. Scriptural reasoning is a practice that sometimes treasures disagreement as a gift (Adams, 2006: 398).

Paul (a Mormon writing about general principles of interreligious dialogue) advocates an approach that utilizes “Respectful Contestation”:

Through forthright dialogue that discloses both appreciation and criticism, we can fulfil our obligations to express as witnesses the truth we hold dear, and to listen as our opponents do the same. We must choose not to rip our garments in disgust at their claims, because we enter the contestation granting respect for the intelligence, integrity, and goodwill for our opponent. If in this experience we come to trust the motive (not the doctrine) of our opponents, we have a basis upon which to build trustworthy diplomatic relations. Even religious zealots can sustain a peaceful tension of co-resistance with opponents, who like them desire to influence the hearts and minds of others for good (2011: 4).

Christian and non-Christian religions, but there are significant differences between the teachings of who Jesus was and is. To suggest otherwise goes beyond the boundaries of the doctrines of the Church. To suggest that Mormons and others share a common view of Jesus could be analogous to suggesting that Jews, Christians and Muslims hold a common view of God. Nibley provides an example of the limitations that should be placed upon the seeking of commonalities. In his comparison of Islam and Mormonism he highlights various commonalities such as the Word of Wisdom and elements of Joseph Smith's life when compared to Muhammad. However, he recognizes that "the resemblances... are quite superficial, while the differences are profound and fundamental" (1972: 55). Similarities are important in engagement with other religions but only when they are valid.

The second purpose of seeking convergence which is focussed around the missiological imperative so important for Latter-day Saints, is the recognition that "seeking... such groundwork of truth as may be held in common" will enable the possibility of adding "to that truth, to increase it, to enlarge it, until at the last God, through the agencies He has appointed, shall gather together in one system all truth" (Roberts, 1906: 16);³⁵¹ that one system is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This may not be a palatable objective of engagement with other religions, but as already outlined cannot be ignored when establishing a Mormon paradigm.³⁵²

³⁵¹ An example of such an approach can be found in *The Book of Mormon* where Ammon builds on the common ground he shares with King Lamoni, but adds to that truth:

And Ammon began to speak unto him with boldness, and said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God? And he answered, and said unto him: I do not know what that meaneth. And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea. And Ammon said: This is God. And Ammon said unto him again: Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth? And he said: Yea, I believe that he created all things which are in the earth; but I do not know the heavens (Alma 18: 24-29).

³⁵² See section 5.3d.

The third purpose of utilizing convergence in engaging with other religions is the desire to “work with those of other religions in various undertakings in the everlasting fight against social evils which threaten the treasured values which are so important to all of us” (Hinckley, 1998: 4).³⁵³ Mormon understanding of exaltation is fundamentally about relationships with God, family and others. One of the purposes of the Church is to prepare people for exaltation by forming relationships and giving opportunities to serve. Engagement with other religions (and the resultant actions) can aid in this process. The social aspects of engagement enable people of different religions to take stands on shared concerns. Examples of Latter-day Saint efforts include the combatting of pornography (Hinckley, 1998), and humanitarian efforts to alleviate suffering (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011).³⁵⁴ In so doing Latter-day Saints are fulfilling the admonition to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). To some extent this type of engagement with other religions can be seen to serve the two other purposes of focussing on convergence. It builds understanding on shared values, and can have missiological results (whether intended or not). However, this type of service should be selfless and oriented to those who are served and worked with.

³⁵³ This does not, however, need to be on the basis of religion:

Our pluralistic society makes space for peaceable coexistence and cooperation between diverse people of good will, including the religious and nonreligious... Even so, all societies have some moral basis, whether originating from religion, philosophy, science, or any number of sources. Religious values cannot be dismissed from the public square any more than the vast array of other positive values can be. Efforts to do so ignore the deeply embedded religious antecedents that give shape to the common heritage and identity of peoples across the globe (Newsroom, 2010a: 6-7).

³⁵⁴ Oaks has argued that in seeking principles of religious freedom religions should join together, in so doing, however, such work:

...does not require any examination of the doctrinal differences among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, or even an identification of the many common elements of our beliefs. All that is necessary for unity and a broad coalition along the lines I am suggesting is a common belief that there is a right and wrong in human behaviour that has been established by a Supreme Being. All who believe in that fundamental should unite more effectively to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are (2011: v).

Greggs argues that “dialogue cannot only take place for our own benefit [or our own purposes], but should also take place for the sake of the other, and – ultimately – for the sake of God... Talk must turn into action; and action must lead to further talk” (forthcoming: 382-383). It is a Latter-day Saint’s responsibility to “stand as a witness of God” and to engage in Christlike service. Engaging in inter-faith service opportunities, or campaigns, enable them to be in the service of God.³⁵⁵ Similarly, seeking the best for those who are less fortunate (physically or spiritually) is a religious obligation:

And also, ye yourselves will succour those that stand in need of your succour; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just— But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God (Mosiah 4: 16-18).

Utilizing shared beliefs helps Latter-day Saints live their religion in their daily lives, but also enables those of other religions to have opportunities to practise their religion (either in the service activity, or the resultant “better” society). Both respond to the degree of the light of Christ evident in their religion, both are motivated by a love of God and of humanity. Thus, engagement with other religions becomes a strengthening process for Latter-day Saints. The dialogue and activities provide further opportunities for discussion as believers are able to “build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation” (Nelson, 1994: 71). In focussing on

³⁵⁵ “This can be done without losing independent identity and strength” (Nelson, 1998: 108).

commonality it is important that Latter-day Saints do not become so entangled with commonalities that they lose sight of the differences.³⁵⁶ Latter-day Saints acknowledge the light in other religions, but also teach that there is error that needs addressing and, ultimately, fulfilling.

5.3f Recognizing divergence

Inherent in a missiological purpose for inter-faith dialogue is the recognition that points of divergence need to be recognized and discussed. Mission is not the only reason for sharing differences but, within a Mormon paradigm of engagement with other religions, it is a crucial reason for Latter-day Saints. If other religions have elements of truth, and the light of Christ, then it follows that those aspects of Mormon belief that are not shared are the elements of knowledge that will aid the fulfilment of that light and truth. The two fundamental teachings of Latter-day Saints that would remain preeminent are belief in Christ, with all its associated outworkings, and the prophetic calling of the prophet Joseph Smith. This is not to suggest that no other differences exist, but that these two beliefs are the pillars from which all the others proceed.³⁵⁷ In practice this would mean that however other religions are engaged with or viewed, it must be against the background of the First Vision. Any paradigm of engagement with other religions that seeks to be truly Latter-day Saint must do so retaining the validity and importance of the atonement and First Vision as benchmarks.

³⁵⁶ McConkie argues focussing solely on commonalities dilutes the missiological imperative and motivation for Latter-day Saints and those they hope to convert:

Perhaps we need to rethink the idea of seeking common ground with those we desire to teach. Every similarity we identify leaves them with one less reason to join the Church. When we cease to be different, we cease to be. The commandment to flee Babylon has not been revoked, nor has it been amended to suggest that we seek an intellectual marriage with those not of our faith. The fruit of such a marriage will always be outside the covenant (McConkie, J. 2007: 195).

³⁵⁷ It could be argued that the belief in Christ is the only doctrine that is necessary, as the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith is an outworking of the nature of Christ and his dealings with the world. However, for the purpose of interfaith dialogue, the distinctiveness and centrality of Joseph Smith suggests a separate identification is useful.

We must not become disagreeable as we talk of doctrinal differences. There is no place for acrimony. But we can never surrender or compromise that knowledge which has come to us through revelation and the direct bestowal of keys and authority under the hands of those who held them anciently. Let us never forget that this is a restoration of that which was instituted by the Saviour of the world. It is not a reformation of perceived false practice and doctrine that may have developed through the centuries (Hinckley, 1998: 4).

Recognizing such a basis for engagement with other religions would validate participation for Latter-day Saints who view such relationships as potentially diluting. This approach would also maintain the theological integrity of Mormonism while opening up further possibilities for the Church (not just in terms of people joining).

From outside Mormonism writers have begun to recognize the importance of difference and that far from being bad, it is an antidote to the theory that all religions are the same. The myth of religious unity “has made the world more dangerous by blinding us to the clashes of religions that threaten us worldwide... These differences may not matter to mystics or philosophers of religion, but they matter to ordinary religious people” (Prothero, 2010: 3). The honesty of Latter-day Saints in presenting their beliefs to others lies in the recognition of their distinctive doctrines. Returning to the notion of the creation of a “hybrid” in dishonest dialogue, Gartenstein-Ross argues

The question is whether such doctrinal compromise actually creates interfaith opportunities. Not only is this approach unlikely to bolster interfaith activities, but it may actually undermine them. The available evidence suggests that interfaith dialogue is least effective when those engaging in it do not have their feet firmly planted in their own faith traditions. The point of interfaith dialogue is to learn about religions that are

foreign to us—and an integral part of accomplishing this is being upfront about theological differences. When a church involved in interfaith dialogue soft-pedals Christian doctrine in the interest of painting a picture that appeals to its dialogue partners, its credibility can be undermined. A couple of years ago, I spoke with a member of a conservative church that had recently begun interfaith dialogue with a mosque. Before that, the mosque had dialogued with a more liberal church. Mosque leaders were pleased to have more conservative dialogue partners: They expressed satisfaction that “now we’ll get to see what Christians really think” (2007: 11).

In recognizing the, sometimes brutal, honesty that engagement with other religions entails it will provide Latter-day Saints with a much greater justification to engage in such activities. There will always be the concern about the dilution of a Mormon’s faith, but from the outset there should be an understanding that Latter-day Saints who engage with other religions do so without sacrificing any of their deeply held beliefs, or covenants to “stand as a witness” of Christ (Mosiah 18: 9).

The differences will, however, promote relationships rather than hinder their development:

Rather than turning aside from our differences in an attempt to preserve some putative peace (not really peace at all), it is precisely through exploring these differences together that we learn the meaning of our profound interdependence (Taylor, 2008: 5).

Although differences are increasingly recognized as integral to inter-faith dialogue there are concerns that Latter-day Saints face where other religions may not.³⁵⁸ Lindbeck argues that recognizing difference as a basis means:

³⁵⁸ Paul argues that to argue otherwise is to deny the evident reality of such engagement:

... that the partners in dialogue do not start with the conviction that they really basically agree, but it also means that they are not forced into the dilemma of thinking of themselves as representing a superior (or an inferior) articulation of a common experience of which other religions are inferior (or superior) expressions (1984: 55).

This is not true for a Latter-day Saint engagement in dialogue; the argument of this thesis has been that there is a continuum in terms of a theology of religions and that Mormonism is a fulfilment of all other inferior expressions. This should not, however, lead to an attitude of theological arrogance.

Although mission is the preeminent purpose of dialogue for Latter-day Saints, there are the further benefits of understanding and respect. While Greggs argues that “there is no hierarchy involved with this variety of God’s engagement with the world” (forthcoming: 370), Latter-day Saints would argue the opposite. Thus in the competition of differences Latter-day Saints would always see the truths of their religion to be superior.

5.4 Conclusion

A Latter-day Saint theology of religions provides a strong theological background for engagement with other religions. The establishment of a framework within which Latter-day Saints can participate has involved harmonizing two, seemingly, contradictory strands within

It is often thought that anyone who advocates a religious position as superior to another must be an arrogant fanatic or naïvely undereducated. But looking deeper we should ask, can a humble and wise person live with integrity *without* advocating the higher truth he or she sincerely believes would benefit the world? Our common humanity is found in our similar capacity to care about each other’s welfare and to try to discern what is best to do given diverse contested beliefs and practices. We act on our beliefs and try to persuade others of our views. Neither a liberal education nor an affirmation of common respect for humanity will resolve conflicts over our fundamental beliefs. Education sharpens and clarifies the extraordinary incompatibility between some of our world-views and values. When facing these incompatible truth claims about ultimate purpose and reality over which there has never been universal agreement, people cannot *live* as if in a state of suspended judgment. Humans live in a forced choice test—though agnostic in mind, in body we either join or not, act in favour, or by doing nothing, against the momentous conflicting propositions about truth that learning presents to us (2011: 1-2).

Mormon belief. There is the belief that other religions are false, containing the philosophies of men and the inspiration of the devil; and also a belief that there is truth that is inspired by the light of Christ. Religions of the world are either stumbling blocks or helpful mechanisms toward fulfilment and exaltation.³⁵⁹ The engagement with inter-faith dialogue advocated in the last section of this chapter seeks to retain both elements of Mormon teaching. It recognizes that all participation should be grounded in the distinctiveness of Mormonism (especially the First Vision) and serve a missiological purpose. However, the framework also recognizes the value that inter-faith dialogue can bring to a Latter-day Saint's own faith as they define themselves in relation to the "other", and discover new ways of expressing their belief from the way other religious people practice theirs. As Latter-day Saints recognize that all people are on a continuum leading to fulfilment they are able to recognize the importance of helping non-Mormons be true to their own religion. Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions is much more than identifying beliefs as inspired of the devil. It is also much more than recognizing areas of convergence. Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions should utilize both strands of Mormon belief to be honest and create a fruitful relationship. The fundamentals of a Latter-day Saint engagement with other religions can best be summarized as:

Be honest about the exclusive position and teachings they hold.

Be true to the First Vision and its legacy.

Appreciate the truth found in other religions.

Be open to developing one's own religious practice and understanding.

Help others live their religion.

³⁵⁹ See section 5.2.

This thesis has contributed to writings surrounding theologies of religions from a Mormon perspective. This has never been attempted before, and it has required the explanation of Mormon doctrines and beliefs in classical terms and in a way that utilizes mainstream Christian theology to help to understand the boundaries of Latter-day Saint thought. It is in the systematization of theology that some of the most original aspects of the thesis arise. In developing a Mormon Christology this thesis has built on the writings of Andrus (1968) and Bruce R. McConkie (1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1985a) who have been described as “LDS thinkers influential on Mormon ideas of atonement” (Davies, 2010: 142), in addition to authors such as Talmage (1988 [1915]) and Joseph Smith himself. The systematization of these writings is useful with regard to this thesis, but is not unique. Ostler (2001) has been seen to begin “to formulate for the first time ever a systematic Mormon christology” (Paulsen, 2001: xv). However, the use that this thesis makes of such a christology to explore a theology of religions is unique. The use of models of the atonement, not in common use within Latter-day Saint writings, enables a wider understanding of the application and the scope of the atonement.³⁶⁰ The moral influence and Christus Victor models are seen to be supported by Latter-day Saint teachings but have not been harnessed previously to enable the atoning nature of the whole of Christ’s life to be explored, and the possibility of Christ remaining victor in a universal salvation. The nature of this thesis as being “towards a Latter-day Saint theology of religions” necessitated that some elements have remained undeveloped; and the atoning nature of Christ’s entire mortal life has opened a discussion within Mormon theology which needs greater exploration.

Extending this constructive systematizing of Mormon theology into pneumatology is perhaps the most unique contribution of this thesis. The pneumatology does, however, leave

³⁶⁰ The scope and application cannot extend the “eternal” nature of the atonement, rather that the atonement has application for more than the removal of sin in a person’s life.

questions open that would need to be answered to fully systematize a theology of the Spirit. The lack of writings about the Holy Ghost in a formal Mormon setting has necessitated a greater degree of speculation than in other areas of the thesis. While recognizing the injunction of McConkie not to speculate regarding the origin or destiny of the Holy Ghost (1979: 359) it has been necessary, and possible, for this thesis to draw comparisons between the Son and the Holy Ghost. Within Latter-day Saint teaching one characteristic of “Godhood” is a resurrected, physical body which neither the pre-mortal Christ (Jehovah) or the Holy Ghost possess. Jehovah became God pre-mortally because of his knowledge, obedience and relationship to the Father; but most especially because he was designated so by the Father. Post-mortally Christ achieved perfection on receipt of his immortal body. As a creation of the Father it is possible to speculate that the Holy Ghost had a similar role and progression in the pre-mortal existence, though he is noticeable by his absence in any of the narratives relating to the pre-existence. The possible role of the Holy Ghost in the pre-mortal existence, especially to receive the designation of God from the Father, while speculative, would be valuable to explore in a complete Mormon pneumatology.

The extension of a pneumatology to include the light of Christ is fully justified when contrasted with more mainstream Christian theologies. However, this too opens up areas of exploration which this thesis has only been able to touch upon. In systematizing Mormon pneumatology to fully explore the role of the spirit in creation it was noted that the light of Christ was integral to this process and that all things are governed by it.³⁶¹ As noted by Davies, however, the universe and Latter-day Saint theology is “set against the background of eternal laws and principles, to which all beings must be subject, even deities”, and furthermore that the Father “operates under the constraints of ultimate reality” (2003: 26). These two points seem to be in tension with one another. The laws by which the universe is governed are eternal and are

³⁶¹ See section 3.3a (i).

independent of the Father. However, it is possible to suggest that these laws and principles are harnessed and utilised by the Godhead through the light of Christ (a force that emanates from the Father). Again, however, this is an area of speculation and exploration that will need to be developed to fully construct a Mormon pneumatology.

The existence of the Father as being “developed” from an intelligence, raises similar speculation with regard to a natural theology. Although this thesis recognizes a natural theology through the light of Christ,³⁶² it is also possible to utilise the “creation” of the Father as suggestive of a natural instinct within intelligences to make progression. The initial progress from the pool of intelligences by the first “Father” might be seen to be some kind of natural theology when this being looked around himself and saw intelligences that he felt he could improve. This may have had something to do with the pre-existing eternal principles of the cosmos. If this is so, then it is completely harmonious with the teachings referred to earlier about the light of Christ. If it is through the light of Christ that the Godhead harness these principles and powers, then any natural theology during mortality is made possible through the reception, and acknowledgement, of the light of Christ. However this is speculation and reflects a view that there was a beginning whereas Latter-day Saints might argue, somewhat paradoxically, that “one would find no such beginning” (Davies, 2003: 27).

The pneumatology developed within this thesis highlights the importance of relationships to exaltation and salvation. A Mormon Christology highlighted the need for a unified relationship with the Godhead; as such is the nature of exaltation. In pneumatology the importance of marriage and family are developed in light of the teachings about ordinances and the Holy Spirit of promise. The nature of relationships in the Church as a type for exaltation is an original development of this thesis. This relational ecclesiology places a theological

³⁶² See section 3.3a.

framework for Church service, but also opens up the possibility that the development of relationships outside the Church might also be preludes to salvation. This impacts on a theology of religions as a non-Mormon might be exemplifying prevenient spirit through service and relationships. It might also place additional responsibility on a Latter-day Saint to engage in developing relationships with those not of their faith to develop their own, and others', possibility of exaltation.

The theme of relationships is continued in an exploration of Mormon eschatology. The description of the celestial kingdom as having the "same sociality" as is enjoyed during mortality (D&C 130:2) illustrates how all of the relationships found on the earth find their complete fulfilment in exaltation. However, the nature of relationships outside of exaltation are not fully explored in Mormon theology. Relationships do not seem to be evident in either of the two lower kingdoms suggesting either some kind of compartmentalized, solitary salvation where there is no interaction with others, or an unrecognizability among the inheritors of those kingdoms. It may also be possible that these people have some degree of relationship but it is outside of the family, and is not fulfilling in any sense. Again, this is purely speculative as nothing has been written within Mormonism about conditions within those kingdoms apart from that they surpass all understanding.³⁶³ To surpass all understanding, however, may be indicative that there is some type of interaction with others exemplified by the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms enjoying the presence of the Son and the Holy Ghost respectively (see D&C 76). What type of relationship with the Godhead this implies is not developed.

Although the existence of a continuum (perhaps of many different strands) which finds its fulfilment in salvation and eschatology is a central and original theme of this thesis, it is not without its problems. The contention of the thesis that Mormons should look for the best in other

³⁶³ See section 4.2d.

religions may overlook the integrated nature of the knowledge that a person holds. Reference is made throughout the thesis to “complete” and “partial” truth but in actuality this refers to the complete body of knowledge a person has, rather than individual truths. It is possible that a person holds the complete individual truth that Jesus is the Christ while also possessing the falsity that Christ is the second person of the Trinity (with its associated beliefs). This person’s command of truth must be treated holistically and not on an individual point by point basis. As such if the continuum were viewed as a cross section there would be speckled light held by that person rather than a holistic “dim” light. As a person progresses along the strands of the continuum no light is taken away, rather the “scales” (Acts 9:18) that produce darkness fall away as people understand truths and develop greater relationships. It is evident from this discussion that further exploration of a person’s linear development is needed to complete this Latter-day Saint theology of religions.

In utilising this systematic theology to construct a paradigm of engagement with other religions this thesis has developed rules and an approach that is theologically justifiable, and also outlines the necessity of inter-faith engagement from a Mormon perspective (not least because of mission) but it also recognises the need to exercise caution in engaging other religions in dialogue. The Wittgensteinian use of language games are apparent in a Mormon engagement in inter-faith dialogue. Latter-day Saints need to establish, as a part of the dialogue engaged in, the meaning that they give to terms others interpret differently. For example, the assertion that Latter-day Saints and Muslims believe in one god may be true but what is understood is vastly different and may be portrayed dishonestly if not contextualised. Similarly, in a discussion of salvation what a Latter-day Saints means, and what others assume they mean will be different and will need unpacking at the beginning. To do so, however, Latter-day Saints need to establish clarity in their internal use of language. Two examples highlighted in this thesis are “salvation” and the interpretation of the “Spirit”. This thesis suggests that salvation should be used to refer

to the general salvation available to all people (except the sons of perdition) while exaltation should be used for the fullness of salvation in the celestial kingdom. There is also a need for the “Spirit of the Lord” (and other spirit terminology) to be clarified as referring to either the Holy Ghost or the light of Christ, but not both.

This thesis begins an exploration of the framework for inter-faith dialogue within Mormonism. The main writings within Mormonism with regard to other religions have tended to focus on surface convergence (Palmer, et al, 1997; Blomberg & Robinson, 1997; Millet & Johnson, 2007), and have sometimes been apologetic in nature. Other writings have been of the attitude that Mormonism should stand independent from the world and its religions (McConkie, J. 2007). This thesis has attempted to posit a middle way, where both strands of Latter-day Saint teaching are respected. While some Mormon engagement with other religions has been taking place, the majority has been focussed on particular traditions with no systematic development of a theological paradigm for such engagement. The thesis is thus original, and hopefully a contribution to the beginnings of a Mormon corpus about engagement with other religions. It is hoped that this thesis will begin a discussion about the forms that such engagement can take. It has been important to establish this paradigm, and point the way for further research on how these principles can be applied in specific types of engagement. For example, contestational dialogue will utilise the arguments of the thesis differently to service opportunities with other religions. The principles, however, are applicable to both and will help Latter-day Saints fully engage in inter-faith activities.

This thesis is an example of how such engagement can move Latter-day Saint understanding forward. As a systematizing of Mormon theology alongside a paradigm for inter-faith engagement it forms an original contribution for both of these strands individually, and together.

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